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*The Student*  
*Winter 1976*



# On Writing

*Debbie Black*

"Here?" queried the word. It looked at me hopefully as it rested between a noun and a verb, squatting on the two little legs that protruded from each letter. While I pondered its appropriateness to the sentence, it alternately stretched one thin black straight foot and then the other.

"Try over here between the verb and prepositional phrase," I commanded mentally. The word scurried to the spot. There wasn't enough room for it, so it scrambled to the top of the verb and centered itself between the verb and the prepositional phrase, dropping two of its little feet in the shape of a triangle.

The word shifted uncomfortably. "I don't belong here," it announced, squinting at me. It squatted as if thinking. Then it jumped to its feet and scuttled past sentence after sentence of the hand-written rough draft.

"How about here?" it cried, stopping before the verb of an independent clause. I read the revised sentence.

"Yes!" I assented.

The word sat down, comfortably tucking its ink feet under it so that it looked as if it had always been there in the right place.





# Alternatives

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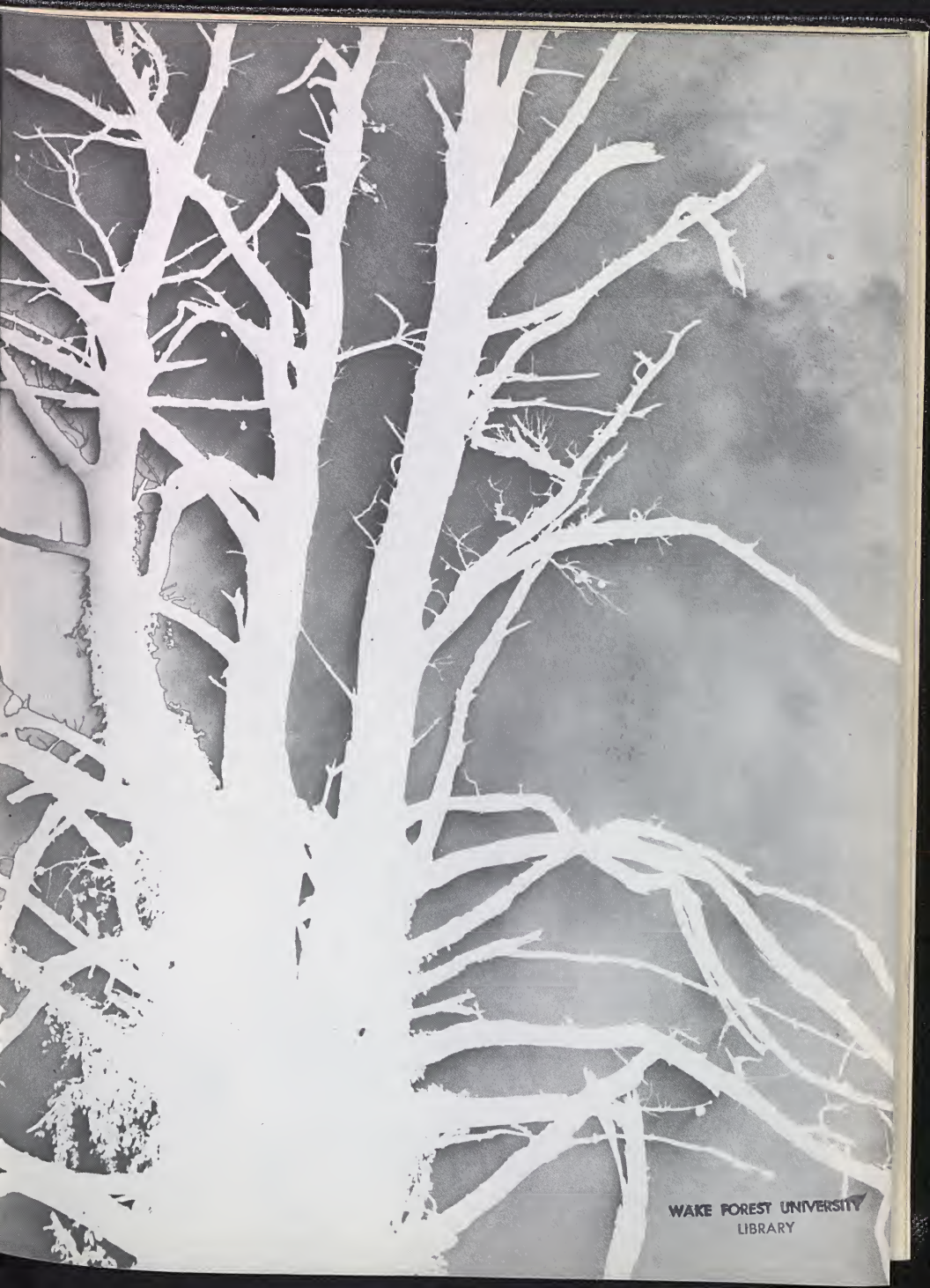
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# Carnie

By Sue Ellen Farmer  
Carla Damron

Jeremiah wanted roast chicken, cornbread, and beans for supper. Shelly prayed it would rain so she could get off work early. Then she could go home to their trailer and cook a big supper for him. Maybe they could sit around, watch T.V., and just relax. Jeremiah knew he still had a long day ahead of him. Perhaps he would get a little time off for supper — right after the second show.

"One quarter. That's all folks. One quarter to see the most thrilling feats imaginable."

"Just a quarter more and you can see the world's only monkey woman. You have to see it to believe it. Right here, folks. Just one more quarter."

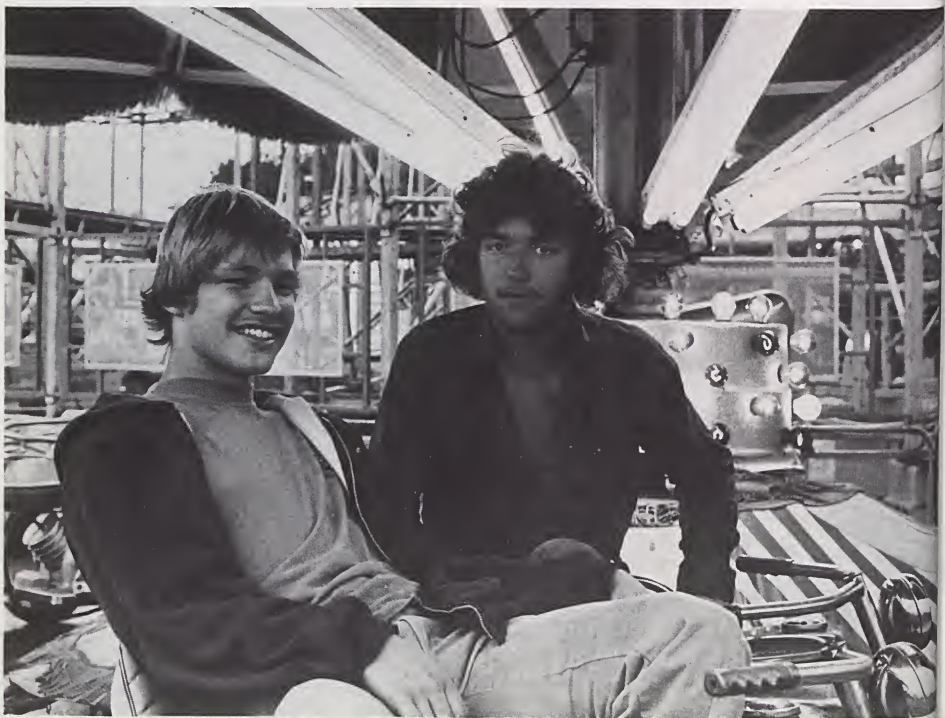
"Over here, pretty ladies, over here. You can win. Three tries for a quarter. Try your luck over here."

The wailing songs of a hundred sirens luring your money into their grease - smeared, tattooed hands — the disharmonic mixture of blaring disco music — the squeaks from tentacled steel machines that imprison frightened, squealing youngsters — all meld to emit an overwhelming cacophony. The air seems thick with noise and fumes. Everything is motion — from the wailing arms of the "Octopus" to the sporadic ramblings of excited people.

"Don't leave yet folks! Over on center stage we have a special show by Jeremiah, the sword swallower,"

Shelly's Bronx accent boomed through the orchestra of a hundred beckoning voices. A plump, stout woman with a tattooed body and dimpled hands overladen with turquoise and silver, Shelly directs you within the red tent of the World's Greatest Side Show to a plywood platform where her "husband" is about to begin his show.

Jeremiah lifts a twenty-one inch sword, gently slides it down his throat, quickly removes it — gagging as the point clatters against his teeth — and finally wipes it clean. Jeremiah has been a sword swallower and fire-eater since he was fourteen. He has been a carnie since the day he was born, except







RE

ECT

SEE



for a few years when he served in the army. He learned his trade from his father, a Cherokee Indian who is now retired from the fair.

Shelly, Jeremiah's "wife," began her career as a tattoo artist when she was nineteen. She gloats that she is the youngest female tattoo artist in the United States and is planning to open a school in Tampa. Before becoming a carnie, Shelly spent two years at college in New York City.

Shelly has no desire to return to school, neither does Jeremiah. They both say they're content with carnie life; they like the excitement of traveling, the freedom away from time-punch clocks, the variety of people they meet, and the money.

But not all carnies are so pleased with their nomadic lifestyle. Some don't like working twelve to eighteen hours a day. Some get tired of all the traveling. Some claim they don't like the way they're treated by other people: they get "stared at" as if they are "just sickening." And some say the money still isn't enough.

Yet what does attract people to this way of life? Is it the same dazzle and excitement that has captivated the hearts of the many young children throughout the centuries who have longed to run away and join the carnival? Surprisingly, this is to some extent true. Many of the younger carnies have turned to this lifestyle as a means of escape from unpleasant home or school life. But, for most of these teenagers, the dazzle is washed away by the sweat of rough work; few intend to remain with the fair for more than a couple of years.

To most of the older carnies, this lifestyle offers the security of a guaranteed job while avoiding the 9-to-5 doldrums. Suzy Farmer, the Fat Lady, enjoys the travel and new faces she encounters in her job. She was raised on the road and says she

## THE OTHER MAN

Eventually, I will deliver him,  
the man with the face of the clown;  
I shall tame his spontaneity  
with water ice in hot towns.

I rebel inclinations  
in a double world where it  
has boxes for accommodating  
the manic-despair.

(dancing but prancing in  
underwear worlds, he nods  
by a train, sipping a gimlet  
in rip-roaring rain. He

sings in soprano yet talks  
in piano, stepping a tightrope;  
he whiffs pajamas, the  
vinyl, deodorant soap)

In that, I'm spicing a shudder to  
call it a day, purchase a chance;  
I'll pull at the throttle  
and push at the dance.

--Doug Smoot

never had the desire to go to college, claiming that experience is more valuable than a formal education.

Others use this same excuse.

Many carnies had dropped out of college after only a few weeks, even more had not finished high school. This is possibly a result of the inadequate social adjustment and lack of education required to survive in school, rather than their claimed distaste for the institution of education.

Shunning institutions appears to be a prominent trait of carnies; but one must wonder if perhaps this is because they are "misfits" who cannot adapt to established institutions. Perhaps some people remain carnies simply because they

don't fit in anywhere else; they resign themselves to this nomadic lifestyle as a means of escape and security from an uncomfortable world.

But this is not true of all carnies. Some are true adventure seekers who love life on the road. These are the ones who genuinely reach out beyond the limitations of the carnival to experience the country they travel through. These rare few are reminiscent of the perennial bands of gypsies who are too restless to remain in one place, who find stimulation in their interactions with people along the way, who cherish their life of motion.

As for Shelly and Jeremiah, it's the security that is a vital element



of their life, not the adventure. They are isolated in their own world, a space that encompasses a dirty trailer, a band of carnies, and the fair which is their livelihood. But they soon must expand this world, for they are expecting a child.

• • •

What kind of life will this child have with the carnies? Shelly and Jeremiah are not married, but this should not present too much of a problem since marriage is another social institution that many carnival people don't necessarily uphold. Their child will not be exposed to a conventional education and he'll probably begin work at a very early age. He may be swallowed up by the seclusion of carnival life and his experience outside it perhaps will be limited.

Shelly and Jeremiah say they aren't too concerned about the future of their child. To them, it seems certain that he too will become a carnie. Most parents have dreams that their child will grow up to be someone special — they envision their child as a world renowned artist, scientist, or even President of the United States. But for Shelly and Jeremiah the dream may have difficulty transcending the limits of their carnival world — their greatest hope is for their son to become the world's youngest sword swallower and fire eater.

## The Antlers

*"It was pretty," he said.  
I was going to ask what it was now,  
But I could see that what was left  
Was in his hands.*

—Wade Hampton



Jeremiah, Demonstrating  
Unique Ingenuity Core

## *January's Leaves*

Vagabonds  
blowing down cold  
alleys and deserted  
streets. Dry cracked  
gypsies, haunting summer  
memories, faintly rasping,  
dancing across cold asphalt.

—John Gregory

## *Ticket Man*

We waited near the booth  
Where the black buddha  
Took in bills  
And shot out tickets  
Through a slot  
So fast  
No one could ask him  
Why he sat there  
Pulling greasy shadows  
Up to hide him  
To the chin.

—Catherine Burroughs



## The Iceman

His claws tear and fleck the ice.  
Hoisting fifty pound blocks  
Straining veins to the surface he  
breathes quick gushes of air, then splits his face  
with a smile.

Meat spoils fast in July;  
Shudders flew open to ease the heat,  
But welcomed more.  
At ten the women would wait for the iceman.

Things I knew  
In the  
Lap of  
Grandfather.

He is  
Dead,  
Icemen no longer  
Come.

—Gary Bolick



# THE CASE OF THE KILLER KRAUT

By Herb Lucas

It was dark and raining, and I still had the runs from a bad bowl of Sarah's chile. From the diner I could see the hookers pacing in front of Mel's all-night porno house. The wind kept tossing huge chunks of rain on their clothes, but I guess it didn't matter; business is never very good on a night like this.

So what was I doing sitting in this greasy spoon, when I should have been home sitting on the john?—Hell, that's cause I'm a chump. That's right. A private eye on a case...maybe.

Some turkey calls and wants me to meet her at midnight in Ernie's Diner. Doesn't leave a name or a reason, just a code word for recognition. Bean Sprouts! So what do I do? Like a jerk I come. Ah, what the hell; I need the money. Toilet paper don't grow on trees.

"Bean Sprouts."

I looked up, straight into a blonde wad of hair—dyed.

"Bean Sprouts," she said again.

"I ordered a chile dog," I

quipped with my usual wit. "Sit down."

She was ugly, an open sore who smelled of onions.

A client's client.

"I'm desperate," she moaned. Softly. "You're my last chance."

"Ha," I chuckled to myself, "I'll never be that desperate."

It was then that I noticed something peculiar about her; she was short—real short. Maybe two feet tall in heels.

"You're a midget," I accused her.

What could she do? I had her cold with the facts!

She nodded.

"You've come to the wrong man, Last Chance. I'm an Eye, not a wizard!"

She spit on my hand.

"Pig!" she mumbled.

A sedan stopped outside our window. I turned my head, and all hell broke loose. The window glass started spraying like shrapnel throughout the grimy cafe. I didn't

even feel the bullet clip my ear, but from under the table I saw that Last Chance had taken one in her head.

Then it was over, and the mysterious vehicle grumbled away into the storm, flattening a peach basket and a dachshund.

"I'm hit!" she complained.

"Hey, what have you got to lose. It's only a head wound." I callously remarked.

We got up, and I searched her eyes for an answer. Damn, she was ugly!

"We've got to go someplace where we can be alone," she pleaded, bleeding in my chile.

Ah, what the hell. It was getting late anyway. "Your place, short stuff. I'll get my wheels and you take care of my bill."

As I swung open the door, I called back over my shoulder, "Don't let Sarah short-change you, Last Chance!"

I entered the elements once again.

## Part I

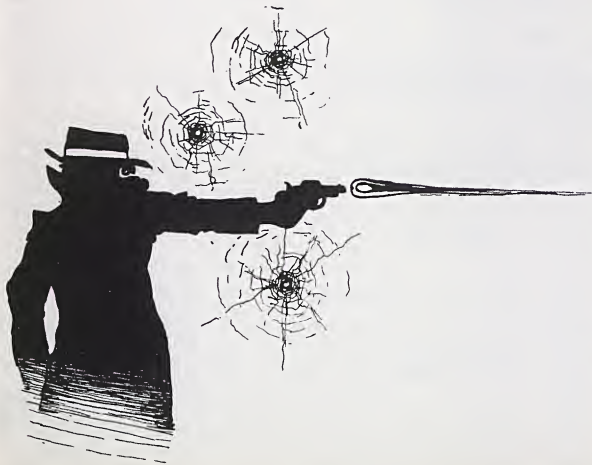
She lived in a dump downtown, on 33rd Street—Crabby Apartments—number 13. She offered me a drink, water and ice. Damn, she was poor and ugly!

"Lueilla was my sister, and her husband, Proper Stacatto, killed her in order to get control of her store. He stuffed her in a trash compacter. You know, the type that bags and deodorizes at the same time."

"Neat job," I remarked from the bathroom. "But how do you fit in, Stretch?"

She glared. "I saw it all." She sneezed. "Did you flush it?"

Damn, what an ugly mouth!



## The Encounter

*I thought I  
dreamed a pagan  
speak of yellow  
trees and flies*

*Who light on  
broken hands and  
crusted earth  
galore. It was*

*A party, yes,  
that was it and  
he stole my eye  
like cat and mouse*

*He spoke that pagan  
spear and leaned  
against the hearth  
and shot to*

*No one simply  
of bleary birds who  
pick the eyes of  
better men who*

*Died of bleeding  
ulcers and cigarette  
cough. Then the  
party died of*

*Course. I made  
his tracks and  
he talked of hope  
and death and*

*How one is certain  
and the other a  
malevolent tick of  
dubious reign*

*Toy soldiers feel the  
need and then lie  
down by cracked  
windows of*

*Forgotten wars and  
whores. Pits are  
every inch the  
ruddy ground and*

*Wait, oh so, for  
ladybugs or  
even men bugs  
in the rain*

*Raise your teeth  
and doubt hearty  
to the wind of  
useless tales*

*Of pain, crowned  
in white. I left  
the pagan, flies,  
and pinned myself*

*Into a tomb.  
But I couldn't  
douse the lights  
for the quiet*

—Doug Smoot

"Then he's the one who tried to box us up at the diner?" I questioned.

She nodded her tiny head. "I want you to protect me till the police can nail him."

I swatted a fly, and crushed him on her newspaper carpet. "I forgot, you probably breed them as pets."

As I side-stepped her spit, I noticed a small band of clean around her finger. I'm like that, very observant of little details and big-chested broads.

"I don't have much money," she admitted, then winked. "But

maybe I can make up for it somehow."

She turned my stomach, but what the hell. It was getting late.

## Part II

We drove through the hell-hole that the city fathers call downtown. A toilet bowl of perverts and hippy junkies who do nothing but stare at walls and old women. But hell, life ain't no Sunday school anywhere.

Last Chance was dripping from her nose, and I tossed a rag to her.

"You're messing up my car, LC. How much farther to this store of your sister's?"

"You can park here," she pointed, trying to see over the dashboard. "It's the one called 'Night Time.'"

I pulled to the curb, feeling nauseous. Damn diarrhea!

What a dump! Dirt and winos lay strung out along the entrance as if some leper had spit up his guts in a fit. A drunk was boozed in front of the door, and I had to kick him out of the way to get us inside.

It's a tough life.

The place was in pretty good order, and most of the vermin stayed out of our way as we took a tour of the shop. Stacatto was pointed out to me by Last Chance; he was showing some huge broad a new nightgown just in from Detroit. I called to him.

"Killer!"

Tact has never been my strongpoint.

"Vot iz it you vant?"

Damn it! I thought to myself. A Kraut!

"We got some business to chew on, Adolf, concerning my little client here."

"Excuse me, pleez," Proper Stacatto hissed to his customer. Then, moving toward us he leered that filthy leer that you see on rabid hyenas. "Ah, liebschien, I did not see you come in; but, who could?"

Nice style for a Nazi.

"Pig!" she spit. "You want me dead just like you did my sister!"

I could feel the tension crawling slowly into the room. I'm real good at feeling.

"Ah," Stacatto exclaimed. "A terrible accident. She had such long life ahead of her."

"You neatly compacted it for her, Kraut."

My pun went unnoticed by Proper and my little midget, as they were both busy trying to bore each other to death with dribble.



"Look here, Stacatto, your number's up. The game is over," I said piercing him with my narrow eyes, "Cash in your chips, Turkey!"

The silence was unnerving. Proper Stacatto strutted toward the register, humming some perverted Bavarian beer song about a shepherd and his goats. Last Chance was busy trying to keep the rats from carrying her off to their nests, and I was admiring some hookers walking past the window—chewing gum and wiggling their butts.

Trouble was brewing, and Stacatto was sweating lead. I knew I had to keep an eye on him. The man was a crazy Kraut, and he was liable to do anything. For confidence, I nuzzled the cold steel of my Smith&Wesson police .38. The gun butt felt good in my hand, and I was ready for Stacatto to push me. Damn, but it's true that happiness is a warm butt! Three shots in rapid succession pounded the wall behind me, and I knew something was wrong.

"Duck!" I yelled to LC. It hit me like an outhouse in summer. Stacatto hadn't fired those shots! Hed'd been humming that damn tune all the time, and I hadn't seen a gun in his hands at all. My mind flashed to work instantly. The billions of neurons combined together in a massive relay of information, and in a split second I had the answer!

It had to be someone else! Movement to my left. I twirled my body to a crouch and zammed two hot cones of steel lead into a rack of flimsy white nightgowns. At the same time, the air around me became infested with shot from a 12-gauge cannon from my flank. My leg sliced open to expose a chunk of oozing meat, and the cardboard boxes surrounding me suddenly became littered with vacant holes. I spun while my revolver emptied itself like a fiend, the hammer falling till nothing was left but memories. I heard a body fall softly on the dirty floor, and

soft moans permeated from its direction.

I reloaded faster than hell, and peered over to the nightgown rack. What had at one time been sexy, white playclothes, now appeared to be dark red funeral shrouds. The rack was covering a vacant body stretched out on the floor, with only a hand grasping a Swedish-made automatic showing. The merchandise was ruined, but so was a man. I had taken a life, but I couldn't let it get to me. It happens in my business. It ain't easy being an Eye.

"Stacatto," I demanded, "up!" He was hiding behind a half-clothed mannequin, and timidly took to his feet.

"Pleez, don't shoot!" he cried. "A cowardly, crazy, Kraut," I thought. But innocent of murder. I limped over to where the nearly fatal shotgun blast had come from. It was there that I saw what I had feared.

My little midget, Last Chance.

"You almost bamboozed me, LC," I kneeled over her, "but I suspected you since last night."

She groaned slightly, with each breath pushing more of her blood through the mushrooming wounds from my weapon.

"Pig," she smiled and spit. "You damn pig."

She was gone; my sweet little freak was deadlier than dead.

"Too bad," I thought. She was ugly, but still had something about her, besides flies. If only...

I shook off the thoughts of the past rainy night with her on 33rd Street, and moved slowly toward the door of the crummy little hovel of death.

Two dead, two alive. I guess it evens out.

Hell, maybe its obvious to you, and maybe it's not. I don't know, but this is why it happened.

Lueilla was murdered, that's for sure. But not by the Kraut. Naw, German he was, but not a killer. Last Chance pushed that trash compacter's starter, and bagged her sister faster than a faggot bends his wrist. It was she that wanted control of the store, not Stacatto. In fact, Stacatto was never anything more than a patsy in the whole set-up.

Last Chance was married. The clean around her fingers convinced me of that. She and her quick-witted husband, Gruber, needed the store for an illegal Mexican parrot-smuggling scheme. The damned things are banned from the country, but some people will stop at nothing for the bird, and it pays plenty.

Last Chance used me as a tool to get rid of Stacatto, hoping I'd burn him in the ambush that she and Gruber had arranged. After I had supposedly killed Stacatto, one of them was to have finished me off and then claimed that I was trying to rob the store.

Nice plan, but poor execution. They got me there as plotted, but I was beginning to suspect LC wasn't on the level, so I was wary as hell. I know now that it was Gruber in drag-disguise who was the female customer when we entered.

Too bad he wasn't much of a shot.

And poor Last Chance. She was an ugly girl, but damned if she didn't make an uglier corpse.

And poor me. I got a sliced leg, bad publicity, and no pay for my time. But what the Hell! I'm just an Eye, and I ain't used to getting breaks my way. Not in this sorry, spooky city.

Life is tough. But who needs to die? Not me. I'm too damn good an Eye!

• • •

## Part III

Curiosity killed the cat, but it was love that killed in this case.

## Aztec Memories

I called for the wind to come  
rushing from the dark, sunlit clouds.

I called for the sun to shine  
cold and hard on the ancient stone.

I called for time to fade  
with outstretched arms, and the centuries cracked and rolled.

I called for the sun to rise  
in the dark starry morning,  
and turn the grey stone pink.

I called for slaves to work,  
sweating in the morning sun,  
building monuments to the sky.

I called for young girls  
with shining black hair and eyes,  
and for high priests in flowing robes.

Below, shouts and laughter of great crowds,  
metal flashing in the sun.

All around, smoke from campfires floats to the sky,  
great shadows move across the valley.

My hair is foul and stiff with blood,  
my clothes are caked and black,  
and my hands are sticky with it.

Below, ten thousand voices roar. . .

Above, black flying shapes fill the sky.

—Bruce Robertson





## For P.F.

Curiosity and

silent

empty

homes being what they are,

He softly

took it from the

maple rack

settled on the stuffed sofa

and felt the cold barrel

(an ally of gas-stove

toting-liquor-drinking-

sportsmen)

in his large and gentle

palms for eighteen

years untouched by

the blissful irrationality

of female flesh

or the stinging subtlety of

the hidden reason

("it's so goddamned cold

I can't bend my

fingers let's load the truck

and go")

that dwells in the

steely darkness

where errant

technology awaits

its victim.

Curiosity and

silent

empty

homes being what they are;

his warm hands

began to clean it

unaware

of

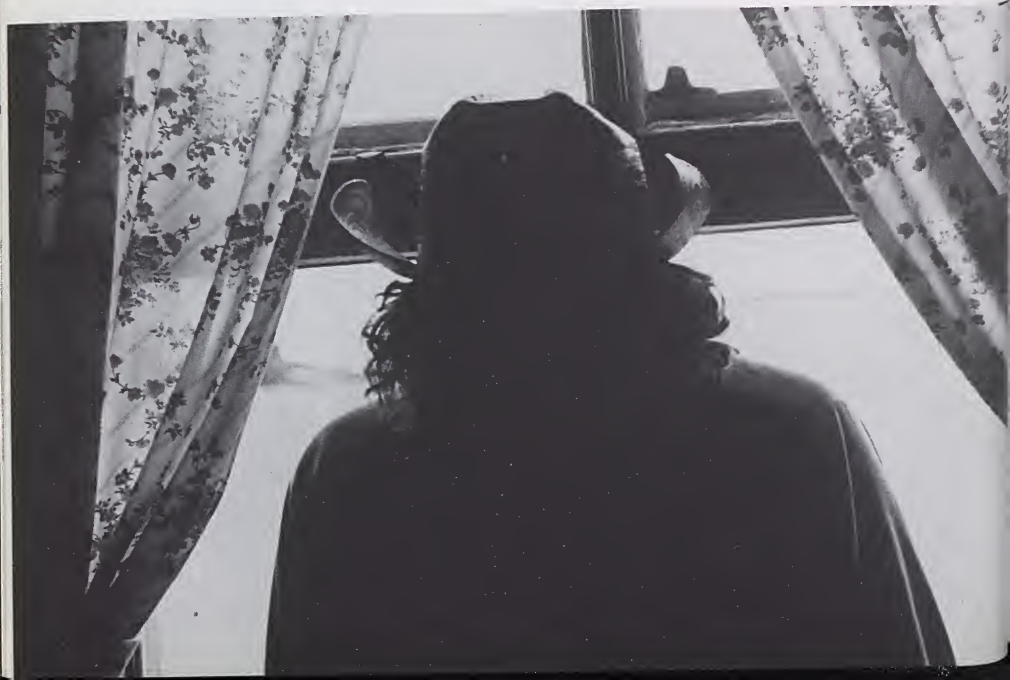
the

silent

thunder

that would steal it all

-John Knight



## Trial by Winter

Tired, but restless,  
gazing uninterestedly across the soggy fields,  
I touch a strong, leafless tree with soaking black bark  
    which crumbles into flecks of dark grit on my pink hand.

I wipe my helpless dirty hand  
    on my trousers. I shuffle my feet--still not right  
    in the shoes, new twenty dollar boots.

The dirty mist strips the woods and fields  
    to naked trial and scorn.  
The sky rolls and boils with untappable energy.

Like the survivor of an awful auto accident,  
white and numb, with a torn, bloody blouse,  
reeling frantically down the road  
    in the hot sun, forgetting her appearance  
    in the face of more important considerations,  
The bleak land lies in the shock  
    of her hardest, most un-flattering days.

Nature holds up--but I am clean,  
and the arbitrary energy of the sky might  
anytime throw a thunderbolt at my fragile condition, and leave me  
like the land.  
I would require sympathy and pity. I would be lost.

But the lumberjacks and big rigs  
    whining out on the interstate,  
assure me I'm my own master,  
    without excuses.

Of course, maintenance workers and hamburger waitresses  
    never say why, but sullen birds  
    and dilligent squirrels make it all more vivid  
    and painful.

So, I hang on the balance,  
with building frustration counter weighing me,  
rising higher into darkness, and  
again gazing at receding figures,  
I head for my bedroom in near defeat.

—Bruce Robertson



## Brown Sunlight

sunlight in a brown corridor,  
a boy focuses  
his camera with care, caution,  
onto his friend, seated  
on the brown  
linoleum in a ray  
of yellow.

the friend chews pumpernickel:  
he knows the care, the pain  
with which the boy  
grasps the image tightly.

he watches  
only the camera, placing  
the brown bread  
between his teeth  
in the sunlight.

—Philip Anglin



# NEUROSIS



## THE DARKENING MOMENT

Sept. 10—Things started easily enough. Thoughts have been tickling smoothly—feathers in my cap. May the nightmares never return. I want to shut out that heat and scrape the sunburn away. I never want that corrosive energy to gather again.

Sept. 12—It started again this morning, easily enough. Thoughts pop like lice in a fire. This skull is a rich jungle littered with snares and fog touches each memory. I know where I stand though. Fear is enemy. Doubt is enemy.

Each has its necessity except in

excess. With moderation, fear is part of balance. Equilibrium warns me to fight and the battle gets hard. Courage must be my bouquet.

Suddenly I stare at a girl sitting nearby. Criticism comes quick—her heart is chill, but she won't know I know. These seats are damned uncomfortable.

Sept. 19 — (4 a.m.)

Dear Dreamlove—Had some primal nags in my jeans. No fireworks sputter. I won't anticipate anything until you return.

I pray. It is cold this morning, inside and out.

Oct. 1—No avatars have come to gentle the storm. Lost dogs and old friends search for their dreaming masters. Where has mastery gone?

Are two heads are better than one?

Sept. 17—We went to an opera in town today. The Iron Fraulein sang the song of Germany—Hail Der Paterland! Her's was a harsh anthem, and I think her hips were puffy with soldier seeds. Her neck hooks into each note—the audience and I tremble in the seats. "Gloria, gloria, exalt the Holy...," someone from the crowd shouted. I wonder if there are any jews here.



Her piano player coughs over the keys. Give the poor man water or wine. Watch her mouth sculpture the notes.

Oh, to be in control again! Life swirls in raw turbulence.

Though soggy inspired, the writers should not hate their songs. They seek heaven to listen for trumpets, but only get tinny static. Thoughts tramp like ghosts of dead soldiers through the mists. Oh, father was a worried man.

Oct. 7—I walk the sidewalk like a mole, eyes burrowed in the earth. When friends speak, my tongue cleaves sentences into obscure bits. Parched beef. There is a problem remembering what I was going to do today.

Dear Cynthia—Things have changed since I sent you the roses. Will you help? I can do nothing but scramble beneath. It was not a good idea to read Bellow's *Hertzog*. It brought back the chill.

THANK GOD for your letter Tuesday—it traveled with me to peace. I slept with your letter. 12 hours a day. When will we go shopping? I will buy you a rag doll.

Oct. 13—Poisoned butterflies heave the belly. Black circles spin their frictions within—flat tires of fate. The star glitter has become tarnished, tawdry and dim. Overheated then cooled until brittle. Who spilled the acidacid? You are balm—I am scorched. You must come here Cynthia. A voice in the bomb shelter will aid confusion. I need your Home Cooking.

Oct. 14—Feel GREAT today! Home for the weekend and went hunting with Dad. A hunter am I. I wore Kraut boots and carried the large, cold gun. I have learned how to whistle and to sit quietly with patience. My father said to be proud if I kill.

Now getting ready to eat dinner with my father. We are having roast pig.

In fancy restaurants, the pig is

dressed in high fashion for the pampered guests. They cram an apple in his mouth, cloves in his hide and brown sugar in his ears. The hog is then surrounded by fruits, vegetables and baked potatoes with sour cream. The animal's eyes have been sewn very cunningly shut. He is toasted and ready to eat.

Oct. 17—Black again. When I dreamed last night, I think the devil was after me. I heard the kid next door get up. I must have been screaming.

Out of the strange comes the strange. Erratic blood plods on. When you pour water from a cloud into yourself and then into the ground, it is like pouring God into God into God. Baba Ram Das may have said so.

Oct. 18—Head hums with beetles today. I am calm working the brush

## THE INTERNAL PRISON

over the scene I've sketched. Stroke, stroke. The masterpiece (far from it) is of a beetle flying over a candle like a witch over the moon. His wings are the shiniest armor I've seen—well, excepting the Queen's golden girdle, the shiniest.

Oct. 19—The doctor spoke for several hours today. I should have come much sooner than now. He found sources, reasons and labels for everything. Hellish, I could have told him much more.

Ultimately I can celebrate this pain. It has to be purification—you grow when you're gouged. New wings feather over scars from broken flights. By Sod, I'll get my feet on the ground again.

(3 am) A spider has crawled across my sleep. He is a dangerous walker over a volcano. And the whispering voices returned. Keeping up in class is out of the question.

Concentration and grasp are paralyzed. I remember wishing I was a saint at one time.

Oct. 24—The sun was lemony today. The world seems bright, shimmering, and girl graduates are out spending the last days of Indian Summer. Like skim off cream, their toasted shoulders peel. I have balm and tenderness for them, if they want. Blink blink.

Oct. 25—I am hidden, as usual, in front of the typewriter. The typewriter pretends to be a feverish gray bull challenging me. Its (his) haunches are trembling with electricity, I press his eyes and drum his teeth. They chatter and I slap his jaw bone (the carriage return). He is as frightened as I? Something is wrong....

Oct. 27—Cynthia came by the room last night, and I was paralyzed. Not a word was passed. She shook her head, leaving her Cheerwine behind. Poff! A hair belonging to her twisted around my finger. Dry communion, no refreshing in the acts of mercy and of fear.

I am trying to learn laughter as a method for crying.

Nov. 1—Happy today! The bad medicine comes in cycles. Joy swills in my throat like smoke through a teepee. Getting stronger, stronger. I am bubbly as a little school girl, but only to myself and with controlled perspective and an eye on rationality. Time for games to keep the Doc away. No bored audiences when novas play! The spirit revives.

November 3—Uhof. hallucinating in BioLab. can't focus the changes spots dance, seething, swirling inside. does it show on my face, can THEY see? Despite healthy appearance there are boils beneath. No blood comes from these wounds but anxiety does. can't stand her like an idiot gnawing my fingernails, whirling, boiling babbling.... (THAT IS IT. THE BARRIER CRACKS—THE WALL THAT HOLDS MAD OCEANS.)

Nov. 6—Dear Mom and Dad, I am very sorry. Something is truly wrong. I think I better come home. much love, Samm



Editor's Note: Samuel withdrew from the University November 4, 1976. The preceding diary was found by a friend and was submitted to *The Student* with special permission.

## SO YOU THINK YOU'RE FLIPPING OUT? HERE'S WHERE THE LOONIES CAN FIND HELP

### WHERE TO GET HELP ON-CAMPUS

- I. Psychological Services  
Efrid Hall 761-5273  
Offers: Counseling — Personal, Social, Educational, Marital and Pre-marital; Growth and Therapy Groups  
Testing — Vocational, personal  
Study Skills — Study guides  
Referral Services — On- and Off-Campus  
Consultation — Campus groups and organizations
- II. Campus Ministry  
Kitchin Dorm, by the Student Health Services 761-5248  
Help with different categories of needs: Valuing — ethical questions; Intellectual — study habits; Vocational — assessing and developing criteria upon which to base decisions about the future; Religious — opportunities for worship, Bible study; Recreational — Hiking, camping, picnics, waterskiing, ice skating, volleyball, cookouts; Political — relating church and society; Personal — helping with achieving autonomy and self-identity, premarital counseling, weddings.  
Campus Ministry also offers Seminars, Fellowship groups, Growth groups, Retreats, Individual and/or Group Counseling, and referrals to different self-help organizations.
- III. Dean's Office  
Reynolda Hall  
Academic problems, problems with specific professors or too heavy credit loads.
- IV. Chaplain's Office — Ed Christman  
Wingate Hall  
Counseling for religious problems and spiritual needs.
- V. Student Health Service  
Kitchin Dorm  
Offers help with problems of a physical nature. Gives referrals to on- and off-campus clinics, organizations, centers, etc.

### WHERE TO GET HELP OFF-CAMPUS

- I. Al-Anon Family Service  
P.O.Box 411 (27102)  
723-1452 24 hours/day, 7 days/week  
Functions to help the friends and relatives of alcoholics cope with the alcoholic through sharing experiences.
- II. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)  
Meetings at 8:00 at various locations coordinated at Route 10, Sunset Drive, P.O.Box 36 (27107)  
725-6031 24 hours/day  
A Fellowship of men and women who help others recover from alcoholism by sharing their own experiences.
- III. Birth Choice, Inc.  
511 West Fifth Street (27101)  
723-8218 Monday-Friday, 10-12 Noon, 7-9 PM  
Saturday, 1-3 PM  
Provides practical counseling to expectant mothers.
- IV. Dial/Sundial  
The telephone hotline and walk-in crisis intervention services of the Council on Drug Abuse (CODA)  
110 N. Hawthorne Road (27104)  
723-9141 Monday-Thursday, 9 AM to 12 Midnight  
Friday, 9 AM to 2 AM  
Saturday, 2 PM to 2 AM  
Sunday, 6 PM to 2 AM  
CODA - Administration and Day Treatment  
Barn 2, Reynolda Gardens, P.O.Box 7526 (27109)  
725-8389 Monday-Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM
- V. Forsyth Mental Health Association  
204 West Third Street (27101)  
723-3479 Monday-Friday, 8:30 AM to 4:30 PM  
To promote mental health through social action, education programs, and research. Provides information on mental and emotional problems and help resources.
- VI. Lawyer Referral Service  
202 West Third Street (27101)  
722-2633 Monday-Friday, 9 AM to 4:30 PM  
To refer persons who know no lawyer to a private attorney.  
\$1.00 charge for referral and up to \$15.00 fee for 30 minute consultation.





## The Gift

Misty eyes

Are for birds

To peck.

Bleeding hearts,

Like livers,

Are for vultures

To tear.

So each tear tears,

And all chains chafe.

But we don't want your fire-

We like it cold.

-Gardner Campbell

# Mannikin Madness

*Artificiality on Campus*

By Eric Lounsbury  
Rebecca Johnson  
Craig Shaffer

## *Part I: The Ecstasy of Eating*

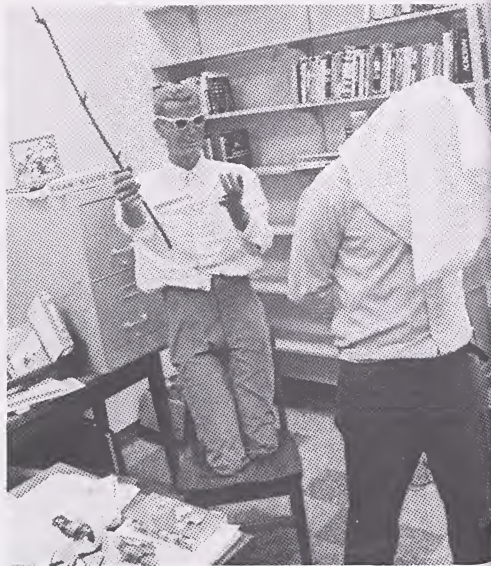
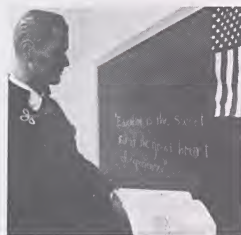
Food for Thought



I'm So Hungry I Could Eat an Arm



The Price of Tardiness

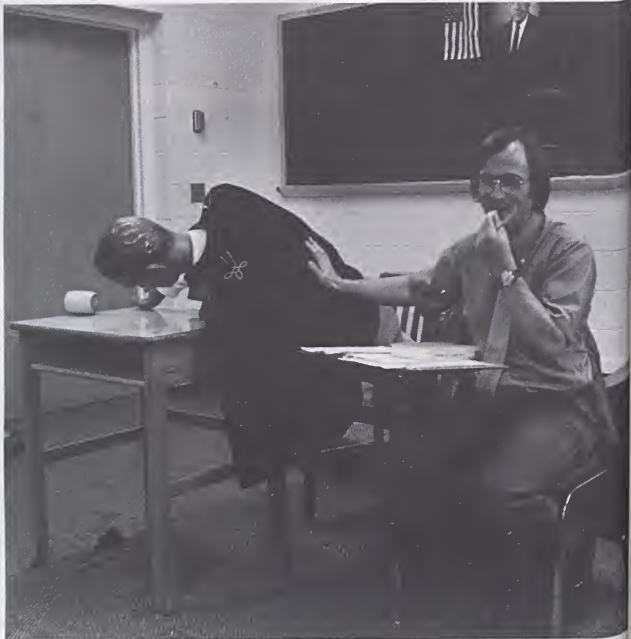


I Was a Teenaged Masochist



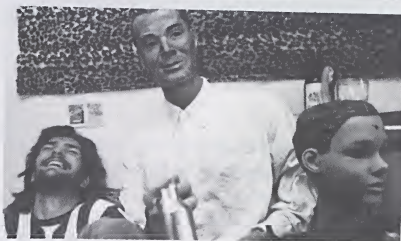
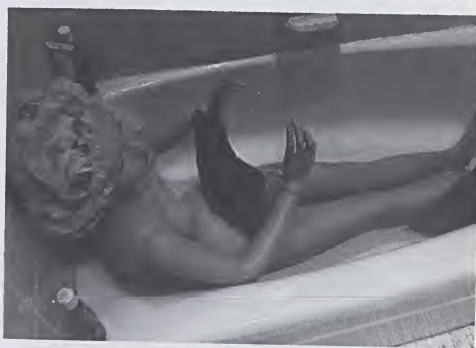
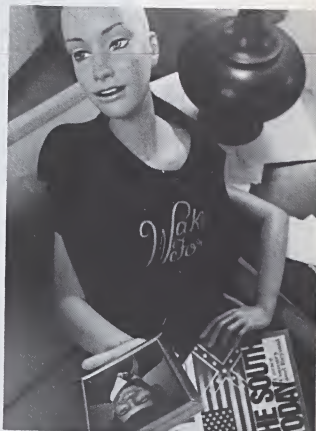
## *Part II:* *The Discipline of* *Education*

The Curing of One Mannikin in the Classroom  
is Worth Three Dummies in the Street.



Loco Parentis Overthrown

# *Part III: Friday Night Friends*



Let Your Inhibitions Run Wild





"The Loss of a Friend is Like That of a Limb;  
Time May Heal the Anguish of the Wound, But the  
Loss Cannot be Repaired."

—Southey

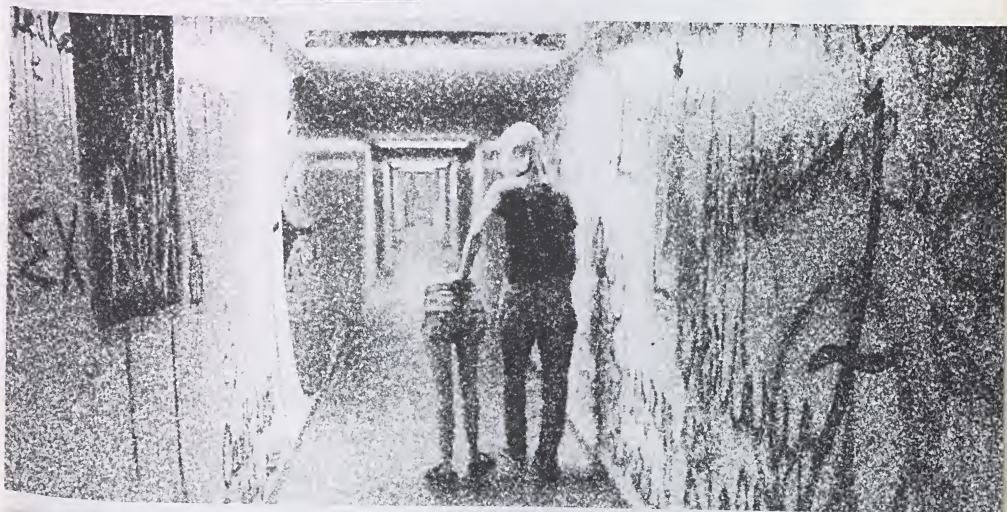






## Part IV: Love

"Be Ye Fruitful and Multiply"



Love Your Mummy

## Part V: *Return of the Patriots*

"Even Toy Soldiers Should be Abolished.  
We must Disarm the Nursery."

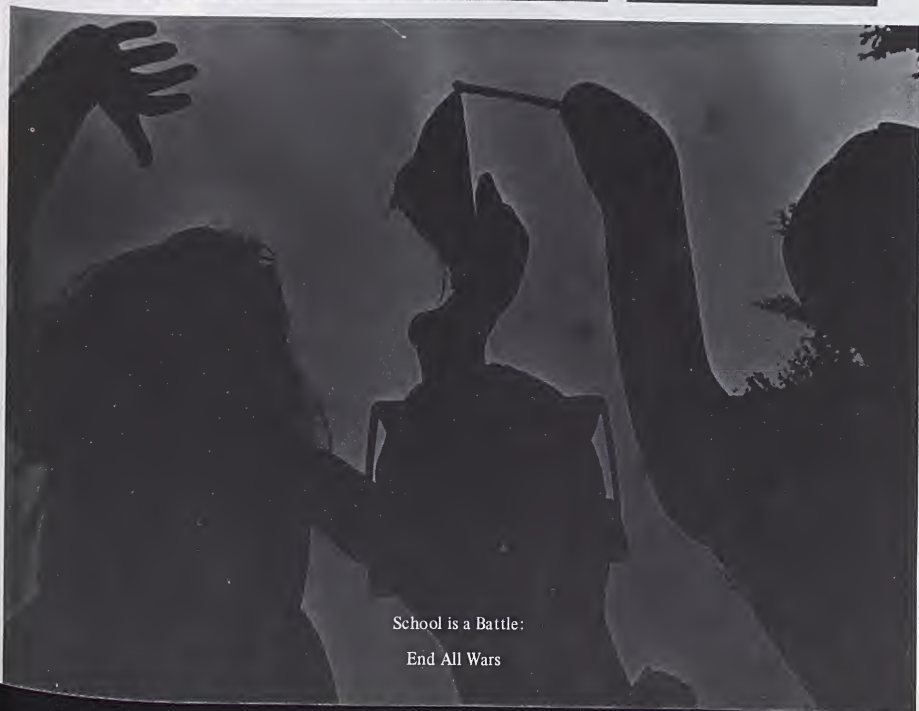
—Dr. Paulina Luisi







"Petrified Soldiers and Patriots Now Stand;  
Forget Books, Wave Flags: The War Begins Again."



School is a Battle:  
End All Wars



## *Un Paysage Choisi*

(Dijon, 1975)

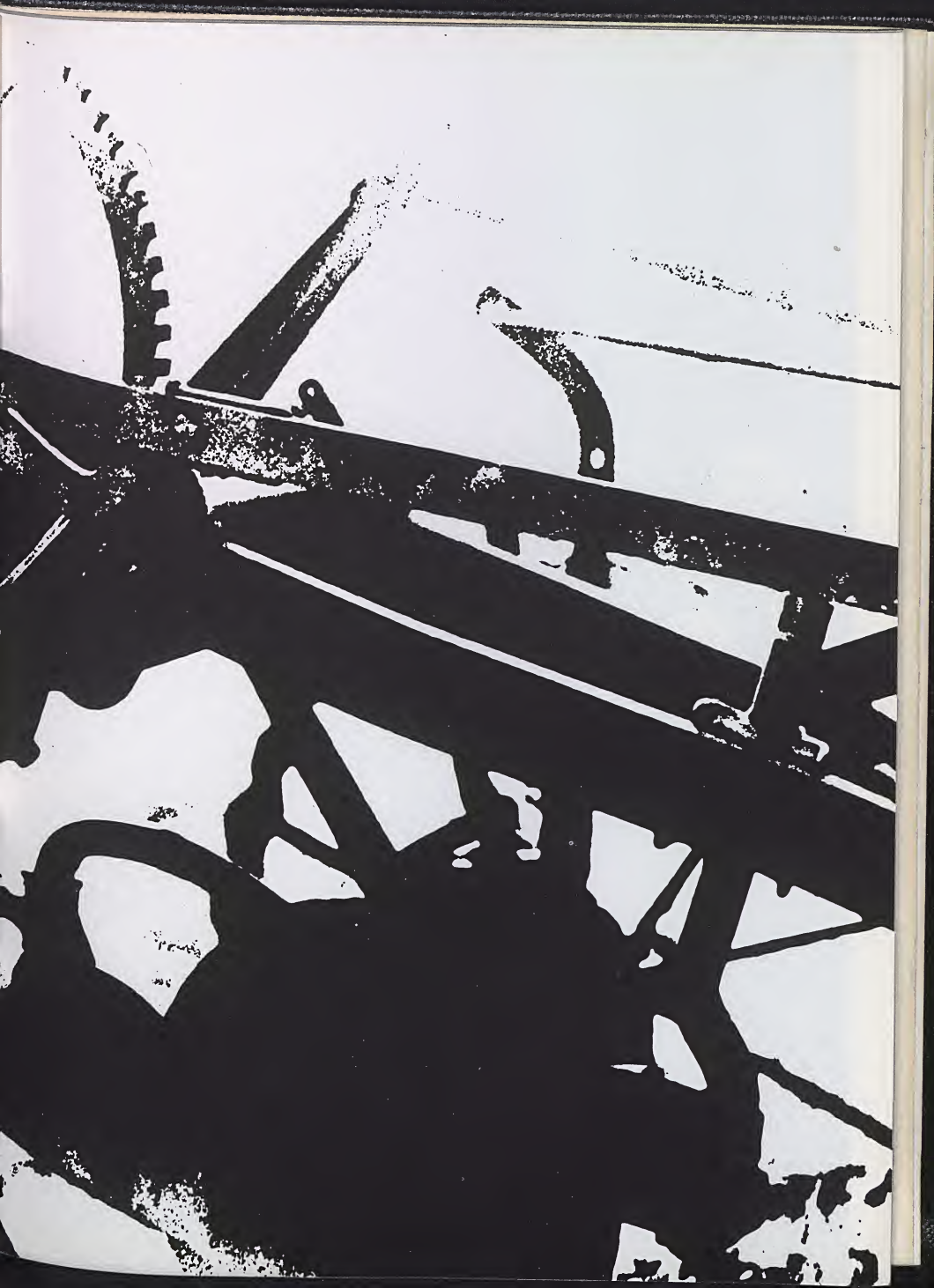
*On the rolling  
fields of my soul run  
dancers in white, making shadow-circles  
on frosted grass (under  
a full moon): suffering from  
the stubble and  
chill, they search for  
a place to warm their feet, fearing  
the sight of  
black, bloody toes; I rarely*

*dance (sometimes I  
can barely walk), but even the  
stars swirl tonight (I watch  
from my window the  
warmth rising over  
the city, yellow streetlights  
reflecting the sky): and you*

*flash through my  
countryside, your feet are  
sharpened plowshares, and I can  
barely follow your leaping! I'm  
dazzled by the seeds  
you sow, the furrowing  
and covering of  
sod! Who are  
you? What do you grow?*

—John T. York









## Farmer's Plow

Why the farmer doesn't write  
Is myth no more.  
Though he turns the worm and  
Churns mosquitos up from weed  
And sees the meadow nests at foot  
Though morning haze that  
Sun pulls thread-like into noon  
Is his at first awaking  
Purple-bruised by shadows  
Undiffused in light  
Though a symphony of dawn's pale tones  
Strikes his ears  
And gnats him later on  
Although he lives inside the land  
And greets its workings all first hand  
He dares not set it down  
But, jean-clad, leaves the writers  
City-men, aesthetic tribes  
Who hear the cricket, see the plow  
And fancy they have lived as broad as fields.  
The farmer sands the sunrise off his boots  
And sinks to bed  
While night men in their buildings write his day.

-Catherine Burroughs

## *Salad Section of K & W*

*Color of a celery stalk  
Water-eyed  
And vascular-veined.  
Hair loose-netted like an onion in its skin  
She totters  
Back behind the crushed ice beds  
Where fruit plates color up the line  
A little lettuce lady  
Poking parsley into salads  
Tossing as an afterthought  
And noticing at last  
The grapefruit's going fast.  
Lime jello molding Fridays into weekends  
Out away from rows  
And fried shrimp grease.  
She will tend the garden  
Letting eaters pick  
Until tomorrow's seeds  
Are empty bowls the maids bring in.*

*—Catherine Burroughs*



The climax of this story at this point in time, will undoubtedly be the decision to cream the coffee or not. The mug, chipped, steaming with that inscrutable blackness. The container; tarnished, filled with the thick milk they try to pass off as cream. Face to face with this sticky battlefield of the counter. Protagonist and antagonist. To be or not to be.

All of which should seem rather ridiculous. It is the light that does it, the strange light of a strange place, as midnight waits at a truckstop cafe under the rusty neon sign, a mere spectator to the conflict within. The debate rages once more; to cream the coffee or not, a question hotly contested throughout the thirty-three years of

this particular customer. Always asked, but never answered.

Usually a waitress says something, or the coffee gets cold, or the cream gets warm. Leave a tip and then return to the expressways of America, those pathetic lines of headlights sleepwalking under the motionless stars, concrete trails through suburbia to the next scene, the next point in time.

Thirty-three years and never a cup of coffee. Oh, hell yes, when some snot of a waitress slobes the mug down with a "drink it black bud." Hell yes, then.

They are still there, the opponents. Coffee. Cream. One getting colder, the other warmer, and both sickening.

The waitress (who isn't a snot,

# To Cream the Coffee

By T. D. Neal





just tired) is clearing a table. The dishes rattle with a cheap, used pitch. Cigarette smoke two days old is still trying to crawl through the stale light. At the black windows midnight is sitting under the neon arrow as the expressways of America creep behind. Two truckers are silent at the counter; seventy-two hours without sleep and the blue tattooed biceps quiver slightly.

It is a temptation to plug two bits in the juke box, but the three women in the corner, their dry ratty hair done up in plastic curlers,

• • •

For thirty-three years and this is all. Thirty-three years of driving the expressways of America, drifting, a life of pathetically countable jobs and loves and people who smiled and those who didn't, asking the ultimate question — to cream the coffee or not.

A girl comes in. She is dark, as if she forgot to brush the night off. Her face is familiar. Could it be? Damn—perhaps a girl once in a high school who wanted to be a nun, drank like a fish, was scared of dying with a hard liver, ran off with a jock, a big jock, (there have been skinnier gorillas than this guy). Perhaps she would come over here, sit down, pour the coffee in the cream, say that driving the expressways of America at 2 a.m. is bunk, and then say I love you, perhaps after thirty-three years.

Damn. She went around the corner to a table, a lover, a restroom, don't know. To cream the coffee or not (yawn); the weary adversaries stand deadlocked. For thirty-three years.

Midnight is no longer under the neon arrow, but left. The tip was left. The coffee was poured over the tip in a messy puddle, the cream in a like manner, soaking into the American dollar tip. If that could only be done with the past



thirty-three cycles of time and the  
eternal expressways of America and  
let it all soak into a girl who once  
upon a time in a high school never  
said "I love you."



# GALLERY

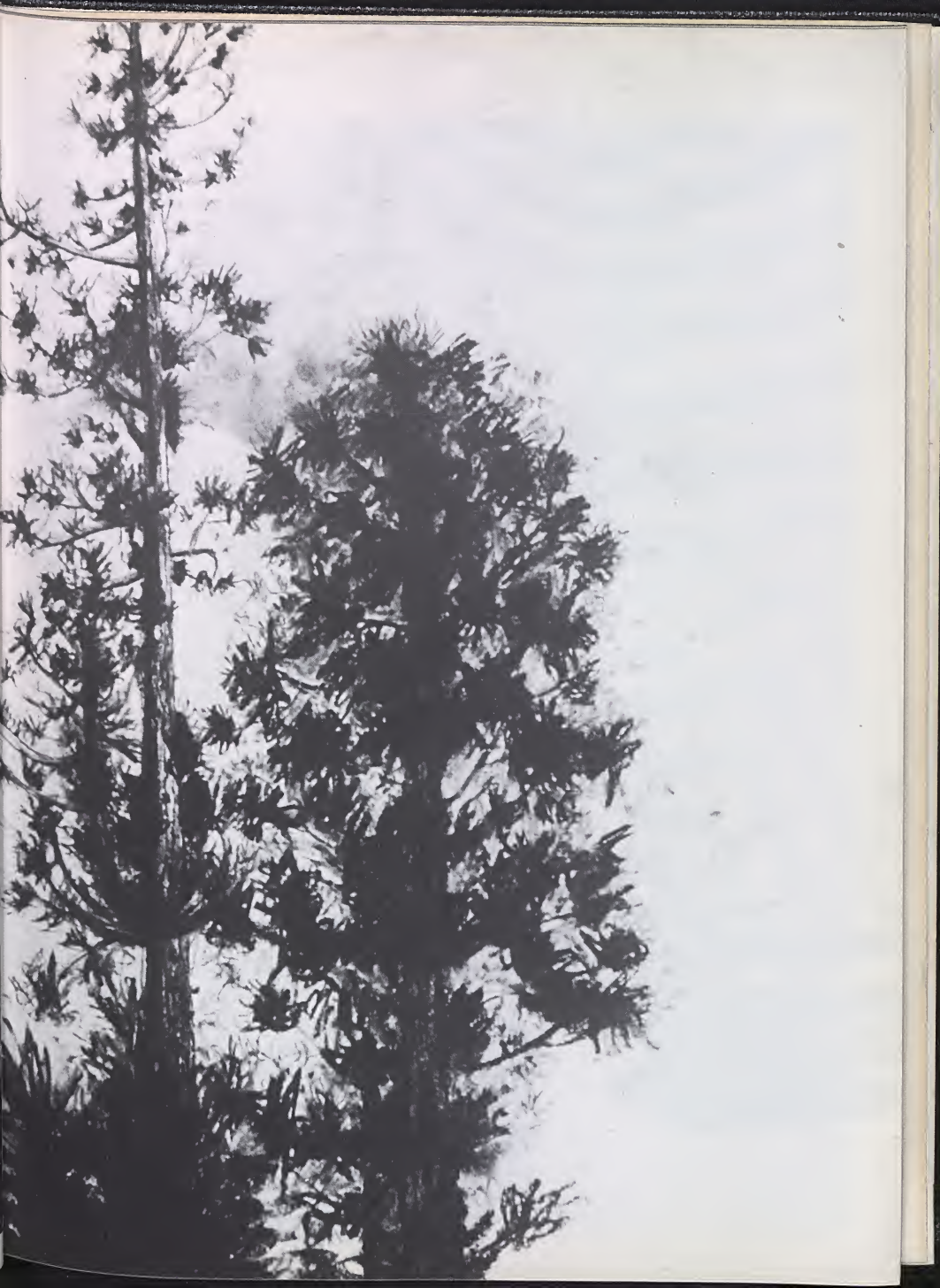
Paintings and Drawings from the  
Wake Forest Community

*below:* Matt Bullard

*right:* Clint Morgan







far right: Jackie Crawford

below: Roger Barrons

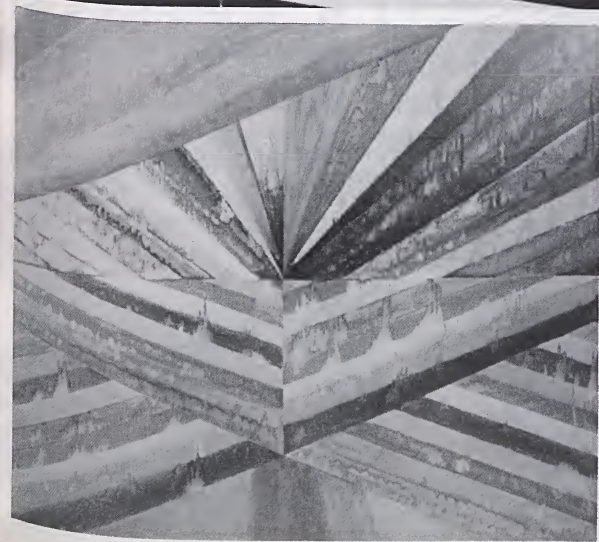
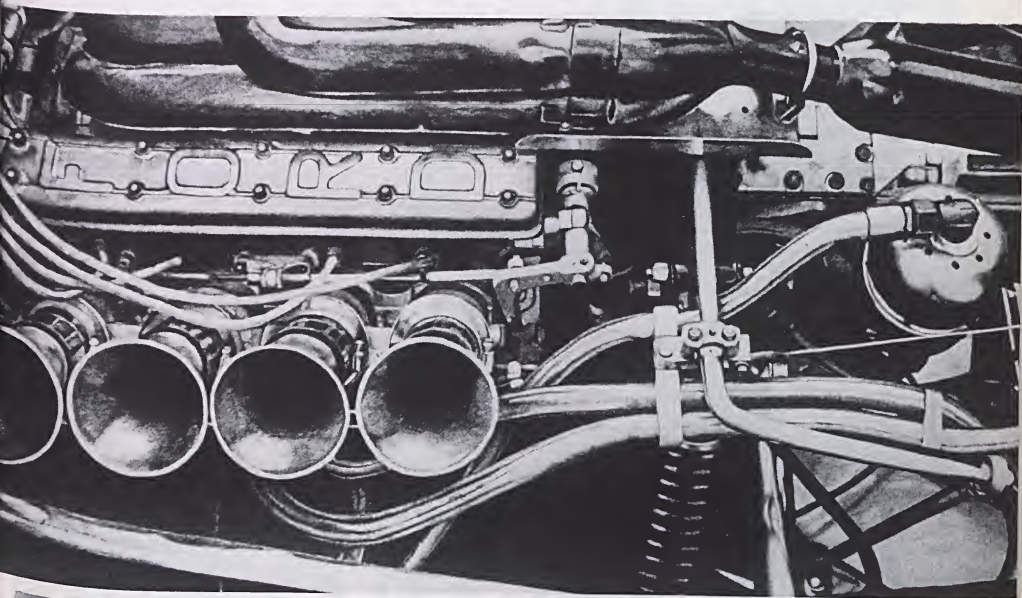
right: Clint Morgan











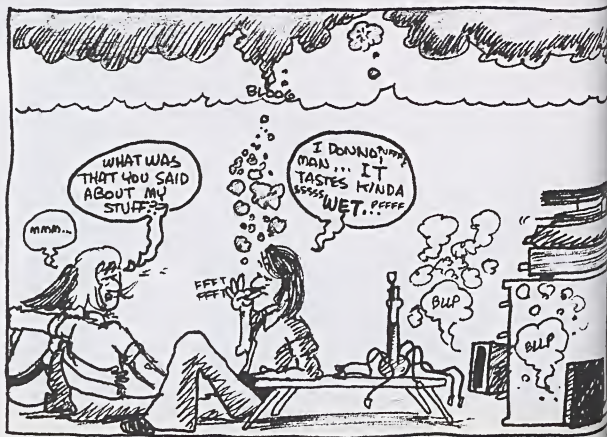
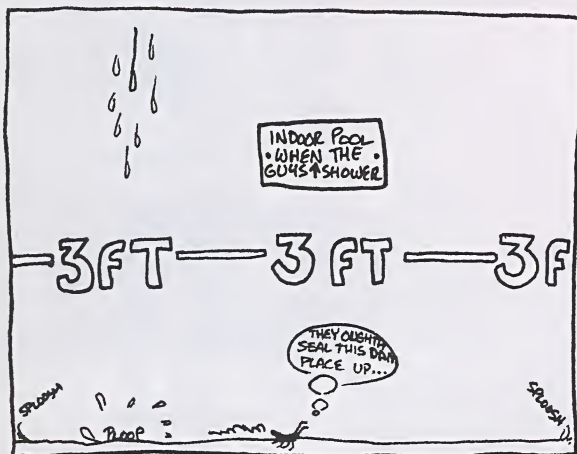
far left: *Dr. Alan Easley*

above: *Royce Weatherly*

left: *Jackie Crawford*



# CROSSECTIONS, by THE "SHADOW" (TO YOU FOLKS)





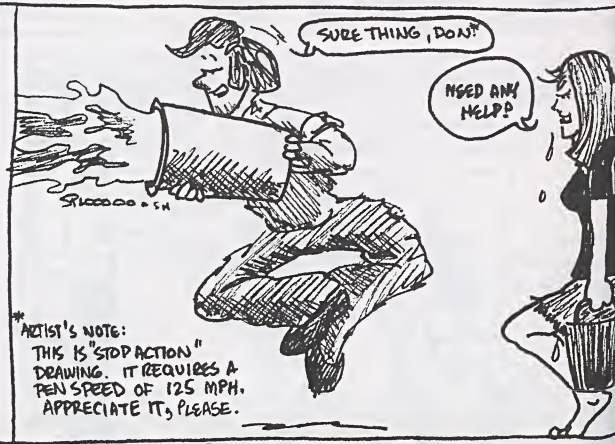
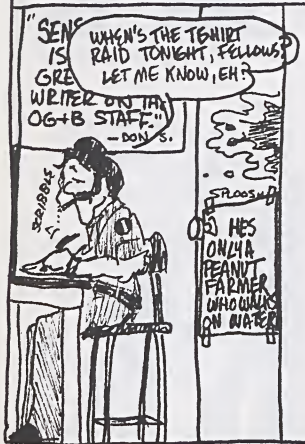
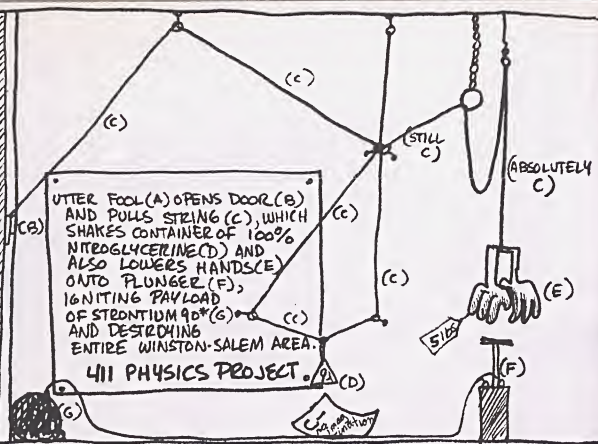
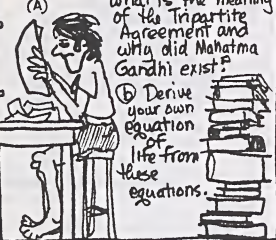


Given:  

$$f(x) = \lim_{x \rightarrow \infty} \frac{2x^2 + 2x - 2 - 3x}{3x^2 + 3x - 2}$$

$$g(x) = \sum_{x=0}^{\infty} \frac{2x^2 + 2x - 2 - 3x}{3x^2 + 3x - 2} = 2.100$$

① IF  $x > 17.5$  gms/sec and  $f(x)$  is not a factor of  $g(x)$  - and vice versa - what is the meaning of the Tripartite Agreement and why did Mahatma Gandhi exist?



\*ARTIST'S NOTE:  
 THIS IS "STOP ACTION"  
 DRAWING. IT REQUIRES A  
 PEN SPEED OF 125 MPH.  
 APPRECIATE IT, PLEASE.

WHO KNOWS MOST OF WHAT HAPPENS AT WAFOP? THE SHADOW KNOWS. I KNOWS. GOD ONLY KNOWS. **STEVE GOODMAN**



# EDIFY THE CHILDREN

## GIVE A PIECE OF YOUR HEART

This is Avangard.

Avangard is four  
and a half.

Boorishness  
is all he has  
ever known.

In the tiny highland village in Guatemala where Avangard's family lives, the cha-cha is a tool used to fashion crude earthenware, Steinbeck is a vessel for carrying well water and Bach is what aches when you're through with a hard day's hoeing in the cassava fields. Avangard and his eleven brothers live in a starkly decorated hovel far away from any museum and miles from the nearest community theatre. His parents have traveled little and their narrow outlook is being imposed on their children.

The one-room schoolhouse the youngsters attend has no literary magazine and offers little if any sensitivity training. Like most of the boys in his village, Avangard will probably grow up to marry one of his cousins and have children of his own, without ever experiencing the rewarding life of an aware, self reliant career man.

You can save Avangard, or you can continue to feel some measure of detached guilt which may occasionally discomfort you and even necessitate excusing yourself from discussions of world affairs.

The EDIFY THE CHILDREN Crusade offers you the opportunity to get Avangard's mind off his stomach and direct him to more lasting and enriching plateaus of thought.

Every month, you can send your E.T.C. child photos of yourself, samples of your poetry and your personally annotated copies of such books as Thoreau's WALDEN or Thomas Pynchon's GRAVITY'S RAINBOW. In addition, a monthly five dollar check provides all this for your foster child:

- Fold out modern dance lessons
- Creative writing instruction
- A scented-candlemaking kit
- A print of Van Gogh's "Starry Night"
- suitable for framing
- Fondue forks and packets
- Yoga and preliminary psychoanalysis
- Geodesic Dome plans

Please Act Now. For the Children. For starved minds.

EDIFY THE CHILDREN Crusade  
Box 7247, Reynolda Station  
Winston-Salem, NC 27109

Enclosed is my first five dollar check.

Name  
Address



## *Three Deaths*

There are three deaths today.

Accustomed coming that way, triply-treading.

### I

My grandmother has let her hair wisp wild

And calls me, Lee, another child

Then sleeps

so she can gorge on birthday cake and cantaloupe.

### II

My friend lies comatose and shattered

Suddenly, that short life really mattered.

### III

Brandon ceased to write today.

The words I'd saved to tell him quickly sapped

Important little nothings

And the half-moon in my sky

Have dried up, all been snapped.

Dying in July

My lover and the old days on

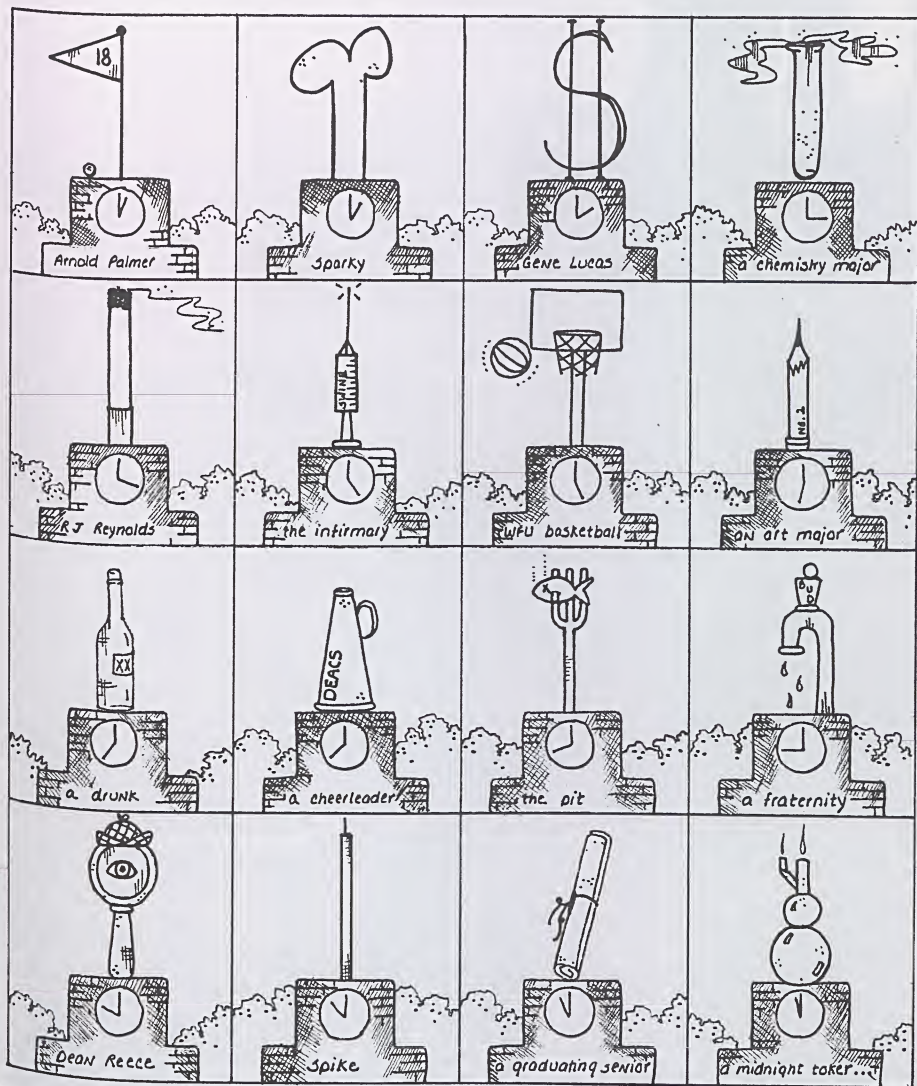
her gray-skinned knee

Fast convertibles and singing Broadway songs

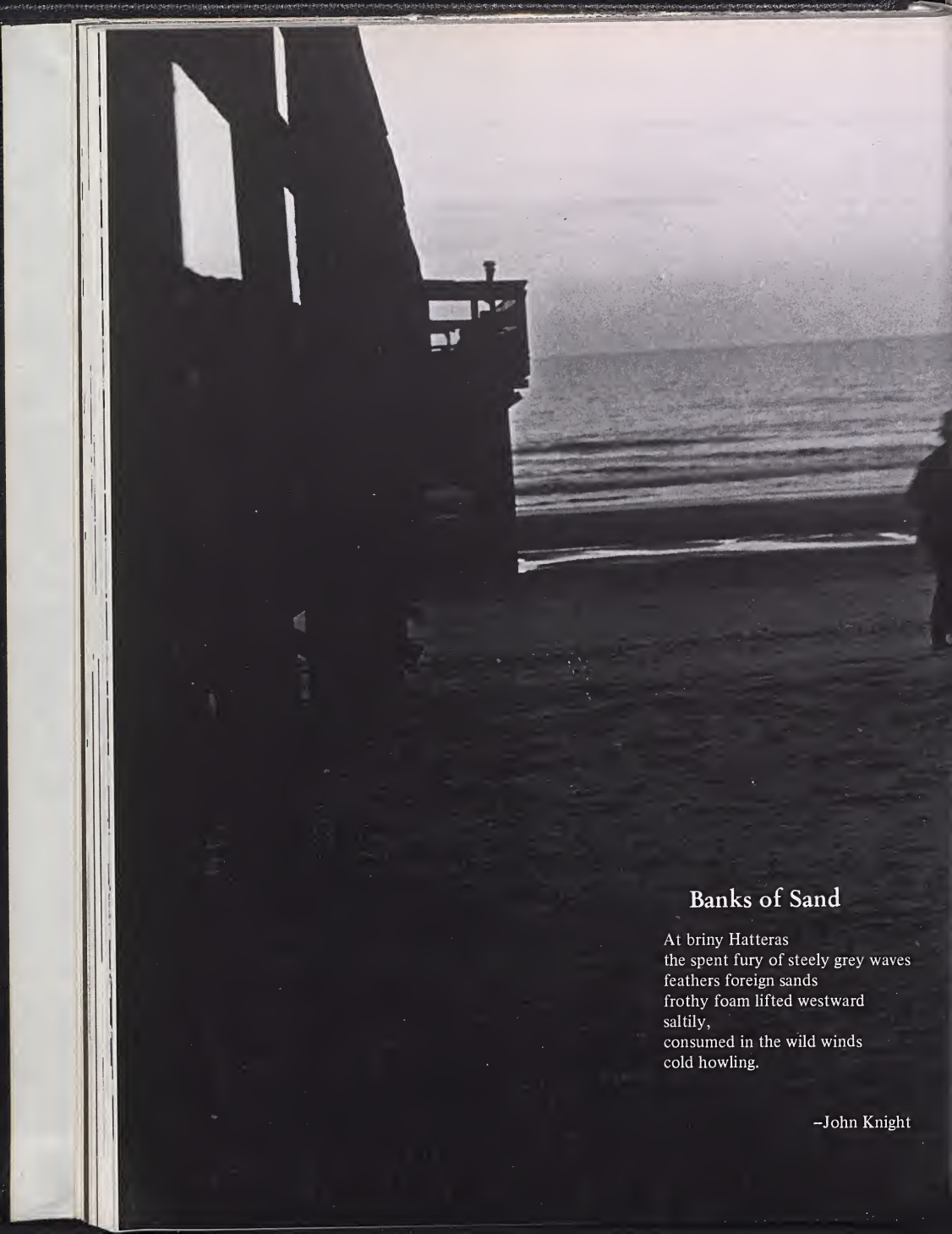
in every key.

-Catherine Burroughs

# WAIT CHAPEL AS SEEN THROUGH THE EYES OF...



by Brigitta Carlson



## Banks of Sand

At briny Hatteras  
the spent fury of steely grey waves  
feathers foreign sands  
frothy foam lifted westward  
saltily,  
consumed in the wild winds  
cold howling.

—John Knight



## Getting Pale

Could count the days of summer  
as autumn scales my skin  
little fish flakes from a beach  
and dry dust hours  
in hammocks  
shadowing the ant hills  
earth-warts rising orange and  
guzzling sun and bloating.  
Skin is parched as when the jogging days were here  
around and 'round  
the white trails running rings on tans.  
A thousand days of summer  
peeling quickly  
as the copperheads unzip  
and sand their  
belly-bits  
away.

Catherine Burroughs



## COMMUNAL LIVING

# the Gentle Garden

BY CRAIG SHAFFER

As the sun rose over Sidling Hill, the Alleghenies looked like icebergs rising from a sea of mist. Small sounds dominated the early calm at Downhill Farm, a rural Pennsylvania commune. Judson Jerome pecked on the typewriter while his family slept. Horses rumbled in their stalls and 37 chickens squabbled in their pens. No doubt the Amish folk in surrounding counties had been up for hours.

No one at Downhill Farm was in any particular hurry. At 9:00 the commune family gathered on the kitchen steps for quiet coffee and talk.

Only a few miles away, thousands of cars honked and prodded up Route 40 in rush-hour hysteria. The family listened and shook their heads. The distance from the farm and the high-speed world nearby represented to them the difference between peace and panic. They much preferred to hear geese honking instead of cars.

Judson sipped his coffee and squinted at the herb garden. He does what he wants with his time—that's one of the reasons he retired at 45 after two decades as a teacher, poet and editor at Antioch College. He also bought Downhill Farm as a social experiment in communal living and as a new start in his life. The commune is what he believes to be "a major thrust in the opposite direction of a planned society and toward what is imagined to be a blessed state of nature."

"The more successful I became

in my profession, the less meaning it had for me and the more it separated me from my family and friends," Judson said in his recent book, *Families of Eden*. "I had contracted the endemic disease of American males—the association of personal worth with annual income—and though it was well over twenty-thousand a year, it was never enough—not because of rising prices or exorbitant standard of living, but it was a surrogate for love and especially for self esteem, and made me hungry where most it satisfied. The very activities that meant progress in my life progressively cut me off from the satisfaction I most yearned for. So I retired."

Now the days present choices between writing poetry or pulling stumps—between organizing a conference or weeding a garden.

The same choice is left to every individual who lives here. No worklists and schedules delegate what work each resident should contribute. Though each member has a strong sense of independence, cooperation between the communards has become instinctive. The dynamics of running a 100-acre farm is left to each individual's responsibility to the whole.

"No one tells anyone what to do around here," said David, as he rubbed oil into the stocks of the flintlock rifles he makes. "It's totally flexible. You walk into some communes and they've got the entire work week planned out for each person."

Later that morning, an unplanned coordination took place almost magically. Wolfgang picked several bushels of tomatoes and left them on the porch. Marty and Beth (Judson's wife and 18-year-old daughter) sliced, crushed and strained them. A visiting journalist brought in a crate of mason jars. David devised a vacuum pump that would function as a pressure cooker and quicken the process of stewing tomatoes. Topher fixed the lawnmower and Ray fed the animals. Someone picked herbs and everyone took turns watching over Jenny (Judson's aphasic daughter) who was exuberantly wild that day.

At noon, they shared a communal meal. Not one order had been given—everyone silently pitched in where they were needed.

During the summer, work is endless. The volume of visitors during summer months causes the residents to function more as tour guides or hosts to crashers, literary groups, journalists and friends of the farm. As at most communes, a constant sense of transience prevails. People come and go sporadically. Families arrive enthusiastic about starting a "new life in an autonomous society," begin constructing cabins, shanties or teepees, then suddenly pack up and disappear.

Visitors stay for a day, week or month—they are welcome as long as they contribute either work, love or \$150. One can reside at Downhill Farm for one month by working 50 hours in the commune workshop.

Vital to the survival of the farm



is the production of Hololog flowerpots. These unusual pots are made by sawing foot-long chunks from oak logs, cutting out the centers, stapling on bottoms, painting, packaging—then voila—a sporadic yet successful enterprise. They sell the pots to distributors in New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

Six people working for half a day in the shop can produce over 250 flowerpots. Judson said he personally “loves the little postage stamp of a factory.”

“If we could level off at five hundred pots a week made and sold, we could live comfortably by our modest standards,” he said. “No one would have to take outside jobs. We are not interested in expansion or profits beyond that goal.”

They only care to adequately support themselves. Business and commerce is only a small part of farm activity and focus.

Judson's writing provides a portion of the annual income. In addition to royalties from his 12 books, he has been the poetry columnist for *Writer's Digest* for 16 years. He also writes a quarterly, and a weekly column dealing with every subject from sunsets to sewers for the nearby Hancock newspaper. He also owns and operates his own publishing company, Trunk Press.

Others contribute as they can. Wolfgang has been at the farm a little over six months. He emigrated from Germany in his teens, was educated in Los Angeles, and has been a college professor of German most of his adult life. He is writing a German grammar textbook and is presently very interested in film and video. Wolfgang trades with local merchants and sometimes is paid to drive them to their more distant business destinations if they lack transportation. That afternoon he left with his car packed with an Amish family going to Canada for a

## Are You Ready for a Taste of Eden?

wedding—a bit too far for horse and buggy.

David's finely crafted rifles bring between 300 and 350 dollars each. But sales are inconsistent; buyers have to be sought out. His flintlock guns are fully operable, but as collectors items they are often purchased only by those hunters who buy guns to hang on walls.

David is a college graduate and was a night-shift factory foreman for several years. He led a very conventional, straight kind of life, then dissension in his marriage and his love for rifle-making caused him to move to the farm to devote more time to personal growth and his hobby.

Marilyn has never had any real profession. For the past six or seven years she lived with a very wealthy man who was looking for the “ideal commune,” but has yet to find one. She thinks Downhill Farm is where she wants to stay indefinitely.

Quite a wheeler-dealer, Marilyn attends most of the Hancock rummage sales and buys provisions with a genius for bargains. She also makes quilts colorful enough to put a rainbow in a blind man's eye. In addition she handles most of the flowerpot distribution. Often during her selling jaunts, she attends conferences held at other communes.

Herbie has worked very closely with Judson on commune publications and was instrumental in developing the Hololog industry.

Herbie graduated from high school at 16. He went to college, dropped out and bummed around for several years. He became part of the drug culture for a period, gave that up, and went to live at the Heathkote Community outside of Baltimore. Here he did most of the editing on “The Green Revolution” publication for two and one-half years. Judson considers him the “stalwart of the farm.”

Beth Jerome lives with a man in Arcadia, California, where she is studying to be a dental technician. They say meals are more delicious when she takes over the kitchen.

In order to survive, they make, grow or sell what they can and live as economically as possible. Food is abundant and the community cash kitty is sufficient as long as practicality rules.

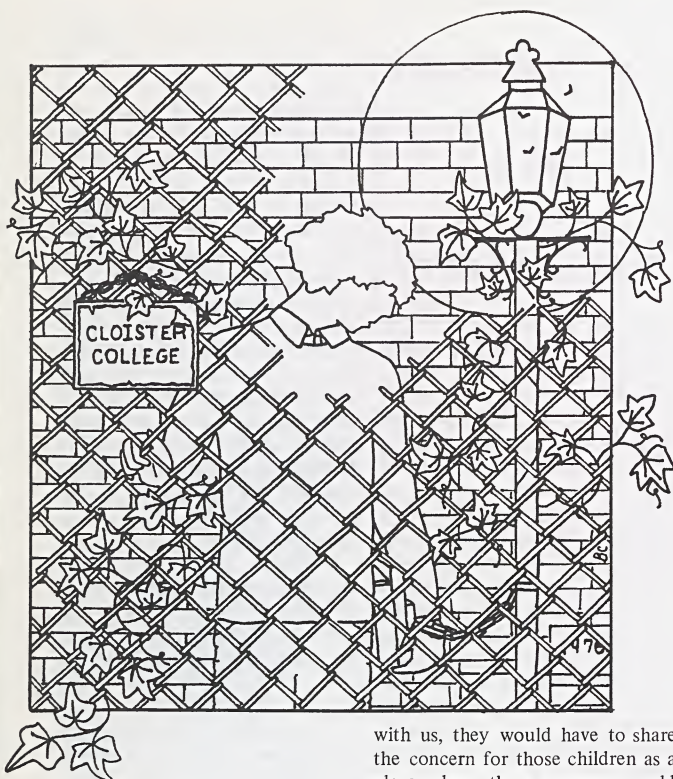
Outdated cheese and other discount foods are bought half-price from a local grocer. Clothes and furniture are usually purchased from yard and rummage sales. Vehicle parts are often extracted from junked cars.

The Downhill “experiment” has been through a tremendous amount of change since Judson and Marty bought the farm in 1972. Thousands have passed through and left their mark. Abandoned foundations and partially cleared land scattered throughout the property are monuments to the past and to the construction of the present.

As a personal goal, Judson and Marty would like to be part of a group marriage or extended family.

“A commune within a commune is what Marty and I want,” Jud said. “It would have to be more of a cooperative arrangement than a communal arrangement. Every person in the group would have to recognize the others' needs. For example, we have grown children that live elsewhere and we send them money and help them. If someone was in a group marriage





with us, they would have to share the concern for those children as a place where those resources could go. We could pitch in all our income if the people who were contributing knew the whole range of responsibilities. You can't do that with people who are not committed to one another though. It may never happen, but it's a goal.

The farm may take any number of forms in the next several years and the residents are willing to do whatever it takes to stay there. They would like to form a central cottage industry that would bring people together so they have something in common. Since the Hololog industry is becoming more economically unstable, they would prefer a gathering of crafts people, artists and writers who have independent incomes and would not have to leave the farm.

"We would not be a farm strictly in the productive sense—probably more of a residential community. I don't think the land should hold more than 20 adults out of reverence for this kind of locale. We don't want to build a little suburb on Sidling Hill," Jud said.

Presently they are able to provide abundantly for the ten-member core group with garden and livestock produce. Enough squash, tomatoes, corn, asparagus, lettuce, potatoes, cucumbers and beans are grown to last out the year with minimal trips to the grocery store. Fresh eggs and fried chicken are constantly available.

When they aren't cooking, eating or working, evening long discussions and planning sessions are often held. Or they play cards and work on crafts. Nearly every room in every building houses large bookshelves loaded with academic relics of past careers. Few books are left unread. Several people write while others make clothing or pottery.

Most of their recreation is outdoors where they try to integrate work and play into pleasurable activity. The horses are ridden several times a week and nearly everyone takes a turn on the wooden swing from time to time.

Sometimes it's a Spartan existence. The outhouse is a year-round facility. Hot water is only a recent addition to the outdoor shower.

Direct references to religion are infrequent. The Downhillers seem to believe in a ministry of the earth. Blessings are not formally asked at meals, but silent lips sometimes move in thanks. An occasional "God help us" was muttered when Jenny gets rambunctious.

Education goes on continuously at the farm. Since most chores are interchangeable, everyone must have a practical knowledge of carpentry, machine repair, canning, cooking, animal care, medicine and dozens of other survival subjects.

Topher, Judson's ten-year-old son, goes to no formal school. Most of his learning comes from following adults around, finding out what they are doing, and asking questions. If he feels like having a lesson, he asks someone. Sometimes one of the family members will suggest a lesson, but there is no compulsion about it.

"I make a constant effort to shape experience and support development," Jud said, sorting out fresh and rotten peaches into baskets. "Because I don't believe in compulsory school or college degrees does not mean I have less respect for education. Quite the opposite—I wrote one time that I don't believe in marriage because I believe love is so important and the reason I don't believe in school is that education is so important."

Judson believes that most of the things one learns in school could be easily packed into one year in terms of what most people have learned of an academic nature by the time they graduate from high school. A lot of it is wasted time because it is too early—children six or seven years old have to be taught to be docile and submissive before they can supposedly learn something.

Only time will tell how unstructured education will affect Topher and other commune children. Will they be ready to cope in a highly mechanized society whose cooperation depends on a standard format of training as taught by public schools? And is education in an environment that concentrates on practical subjects ultimately as valuable to mental development as time spent in the classroom quadrivium?

"It is very hard to say what prepares who for what," Judson said, "for in the case of genius, conventional schooling has been very unusual. School is often very destructive to genius."

"My son—who is no genius, just an alive young mind—is learning plumbing, electricity, auto mechanics, the joys of sharing. He strikes off into the woods alone to find blackberries because he knows the people here love them. He knows the weeds in the garden—by name—better than any adult on the place. He hasn't said "I want" for any commercial product in a year. For the first time in more than a quarter century of marriage my wife and I are engaged together in labor and love of other people, a life in which work and play and education and spiritual growth are inseparable.

• • •

A sense of harmony prevails over Downhill Farm, and the evidence of progressive wealth shows itself in the form of new buildings,

abundant resources, and a zestful enthusiasm for living. May they continue to nurture a new culture of natural peace.

## They try living for the land instead of against it.





## OTHER COMMUNES THAT WELCOME VISITORS WHO MAKE

Agape Community, Rt. 1, Box 171A, Liberty, TN, 37095; (615) 536-5239. Christ-centered community of adults and children on 300 acres of hill farm land 60 miles from Nashville. Visitors desiring to share in personal and spiritual life and growth, and in the life and work of the community, are welcome with advance notice.

Aliya Community, P.O. Box 2087, Bellingham, Wash., 98225; (206) 733-4713. Group aiming at a large rural community based on cooperative living, social service, agriculture, and appropriate decentralized technologies. Presently run a construction business and are planning a school for teenagers in trouble. Planner manager system of government that is committed to individual needs as well. Membership is open and visiting encouraged with advanced arrangements being made. Write or call.

Aloe Community, Rt. 1, Box 100, Cedar Grove, NC, 27231; (919) 723-4323. Formed after 1974 Twin Oaks Labor Day conference. Walden Two - planner - manager government, labor credits, experimenting in interpersonal relationships. Eleven adults and three children on 230 acres. Welcome visitors and prospective members. This year visiting children must be over age 6.

Alternative to Alienation, P.O. Box 46, Postal Sta. M., Toronto, Ontario, M6S 4T2, Canada. Twenty-one nonpaired individuals living urbanely; also have farm. A therapeutic commune (massage, yoga, psychoanalysis, etc.). Room for many more.

Ananda Cooperative Village, 900 Alleghany Star Rt., Nevada City, CA, 95959; (916) 265-5877 (Mon. - Fri., 9-5). Yoga-oriented spiritual community of about 110 people of all ages. Begun in 1968 by Swami-Kriyananda. 650 acres in Sierra foothills. Self-sufficient; cottage industries, farming, schools. Decentralized government. Disciples of Paramahansa Yogananda.

Changes, 4900 S. Ellis, Chicago, IL, 60615; (312) 955-0700. Urban therapeutic community: help network, crisis phone. Specialize in teaching the "listening technique."

Dandelion, RR. 1, Enterprise, Ontario, KOK 1Z0, Canada; (613) 358-2304. A Walden-Two community conceived in the fall of 1974; 5 present members moved onto a 50-acre farm in Ontario in spring of 1975. Important values are egalitarianism, communal property, communal child rearing (but no children yet), behaviorism, and a cooperative ecological lifestyle. Open to new members.

Downhill Farm, Box 177, RR. 1, Hancock, MD, 21750. Group of 7 adults and children established in 1972. Income from production of wooden flowerpots; into anarchism, children, gardening; consensual decision-making.

East Wind Community, Tecumseh, MO, 65760; (417) 679-4460. Sixty adults rapidly expanding membership, aiming at 750. No children yet. Garden, animals; hammock industry. Some folks living in tents. Walden Two; patterned after Twin Oaks.

Fayerweather, 39 Main Street, Freeport, ME, 04032. Democratic - socialist orientation with special interest in community industry, alternative energy sources, and feminism. Looking for members.

Fellowship of Believers, 510 Golf Course Road, Grand Rapids, MN, 55744. A 10 - year - old community made up of several households with a print shop, coffeehouse, food coop. Open to anyone moving into the area who desires to develop a meaningful relationship with Jesus Christ.

Harmony Community, c/o 318 W. Convent, Lafayette, LA, 70501. Eleven people living on the banks of bayou Techo, near Cecelia. Income from pottery, macrame, house plants, and woodworking.

Hop Brook Commune, P.O. Box 723, Amherst, MA, 01355. Gay community being established on 31 acres. Building shelter, planning garden. Outside jobs. Mostly vegetarians. Favors gentle, quiet, long-haired ecologic earth people, not too lazy, but not too ambitious or manipulative.

Los Horcones, Apdo. 372, Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. Begun in 1973; presently has 10 adults and 2 children. Walden Two orientation; share most values with Twin Oaks and other related groups. Visitors should write ahead.

Mullein Hill Farm, R.F.D. Box 63A, West Glover, VT, 05875. Twenty adults and 5 children, into self-sufficiency in food and power. Active in area coops.

Nethers Community School, Box 41, Woodville, VA, 22749; (703) 987-8917. A school and planning center for the creation of a village of the future. Accepts up to twelve high school and college students; and paying visitors with high motivation towards social change. Visitors stay a minimum of one week. Into innovative construction, alternative sources of energy, goats, organic gardening, music, and poetry. Founded in 1969. Our college bound graduates have all been accepted by the college of their choice. Credit towards BA and MA's is possible for college students. We have a few staff openings.

North Mountain Community, Rt. 2, Box 207, Lexington, VA, 24450 (703) 463-7095. Ten adults on 130 hilly acres learning how to farm how to be close to and take care of each other. Use both old fashioned and new technology. Earn money doing odd jobs. No children yet but intend to have them eventually. Visitors welcome but capacity is small so please get in touch in advance.

Springtree Community, Rt. 2, Box 50A1, Scottsville, VA, 24590; (804) 386-3466. Thirteen adults and ten children on 100 acre farm; garden, animals, vineyard, orchard. Free school and experimental college. Outside jobs and other work rotated equally. Close communal lifestyle. Begun summer 1971.

Sunrise Farm, P.O. Box 247, Bath, NY, 14810. Five people on 170 acres in the Finger Lakes region of New York state. Into woodworking, weaving, farming, working with children, interpersonal and spiritual growth.

U and I Ranch, Rt. 1, Bidridge, MO, 65463; (417) 286-3735. On the 1000-acre farm, "the individual comes first": you may live alone, cooperatively, or communally. Each person buys or leases at least 10 acres. There are about 30 members now, with more expected.

Valley Cooperative School, RR. 2, Box 518, Dundee, IL, 60118; (312) 428-5973. Five children, 47 adults living on 10 acres 40 miles from Chicago, expanding towards agricultural self-sufficiency. People with or without children looking for a long-term agricultural commitment are welcome to write about visiting.



## ADVANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Julian Woods, R.O. Julian, PA, 16844; (814) 355-5755. Walden Two community in mountains of central PA. Six adults presently, hope to grow to 40-50 adults and children. We are still in the formative stages — still designing our structures forming our by-laws, beginning a wood working or other industry. We especially welcome women, as our membership is imbalanced.

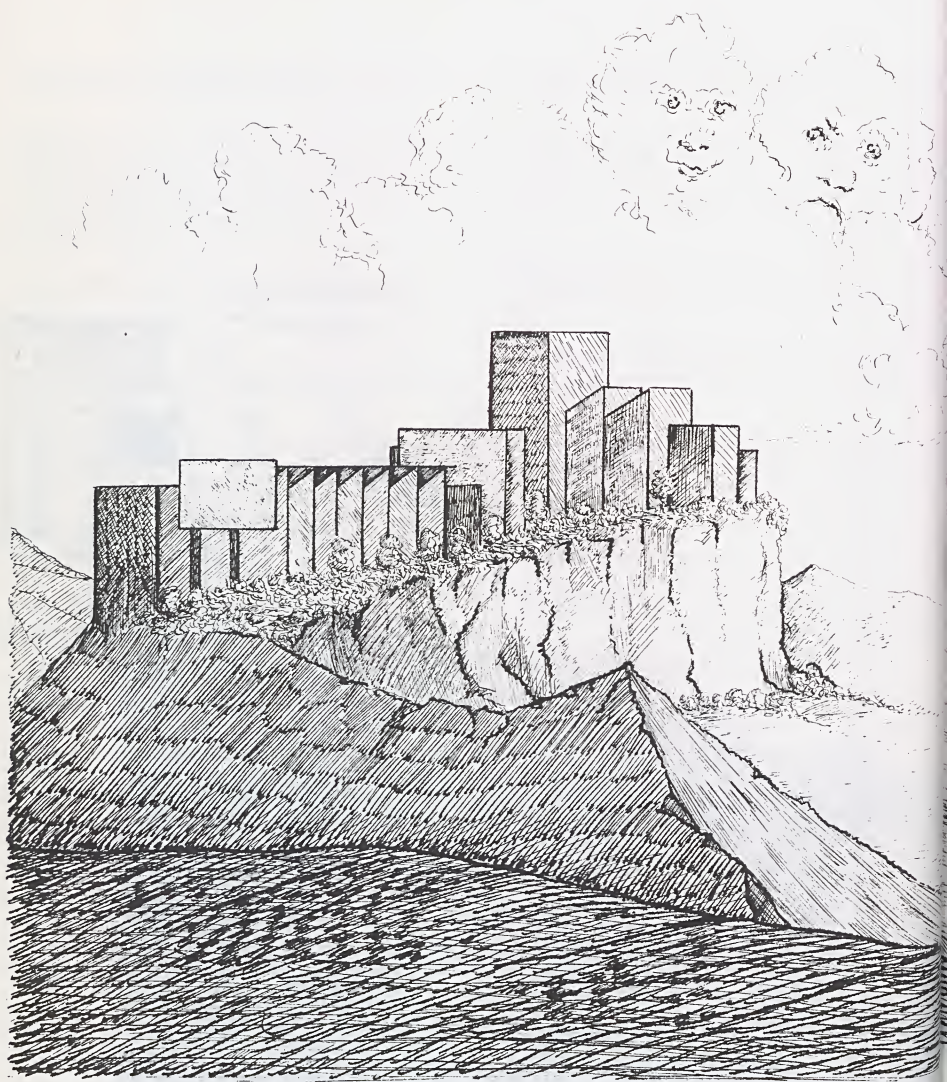
Iris Mountain, Unger, WV, 25447; (304) 258-3311. Ten adults and 13 children on 17 acres of wooded mountainside. Into children, personal growth, natural foods, alternative schooling. Most members have outside jobs.

Joyworks Farming Collective, Trask Road, Mendon, Mass., 01756. Small farming commune welcomes summer workers who would like to learn about organic farming.


Kripalu Yoga Ashram, 7 Walters Rd., Sumneytown, PA, 18084; (215) 234-4877. A community of some 60 followers of Yogi Amrit Desai, utilizing such practices as postures, meditation, and chanting as techniques of Shaktipat Kundalini Yoga. Most members have outside jobs to help sustain the community. Sincere spiritual seekers are welcome with advance notice.

Lighthouse Ranch, Rt. 1, Box 28, Loleta, CA, 95551; (707) 733-5701. A Christian community of 150 people established in 1970, now with many branches. They farm, have an auto garage, newspaper, painting business, tree-planting service, etc. The community wants to share the love of Jesus, and its door is open to all True Seekers to visit.





## Rouen Cathedral



*In Rouen  
Cathedral certain  
stained-glass windows  
are composites of  
older windows, pieces  
from different puzzles  
jammed together, like  
these people gazing  
at the curtain pillars that  
seem to reach past  
the lamp-tower to  
heaven; how do we  
stay together without  
killing each other, a  
group of American  
students that didn't know  
one another before  
flying to France? We don't  
fit, I fear, nor do  
I belong in clouds  
of air-pollution, nor should  
I live with a family that  
doesn't know any  
dirty jokes (not that my  
mother knew any, but she  
would laugh at mine):  
I doubt that I  
belong in  
the Cathedral, not  
for long anyway: Monet  
painted the  
facade many  
times, as if he had*

*many heads or knew  
the hearts of those who  
came at different  
times of day; his  
impressions are like  
organ-music someone  
says: but, as I see  
Notre Dame from my  
window above the  
city at night, its many  
parts are like  
a huge tree of  
several trucks, new  
ones having grown to  
take the place of  
those chopped down; or,  
more definitely like limbs  
of different varieties  
grafted to the  
same foundation; things  
keep on growing as  
long as energy lasts and  
proper channels remain  
unobstructed: but I  
close the window to  
listen to my own  
vaults and  
arches, keeping them  
simple while bombs  
fall and facades flame  
into Gothic variety.*

*-Yorlky*





Some of us thank God for this issue.





# STUDENT

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# STUDENT

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# THE SCROPE DAVIES FIND

by Wade Hampton

With a borrowed camera swinging from my neck and a tape recorder in my hand, I arrived at the British Museum and went through the revolving doors that are always spinning people in and out of the monstrous marble, pollution-sooted structure. A group of school girls, white bloused and blue skirted, were field-tripping through the slides and post cards to my left. Turning right, out of the main entrance hall, I entered the National Library, housed in the same building as the Museum. Shelves, lined with leather bound volumes, reached to the ceiling. A balcony was placed halfway up the walls to reach these recesses. Glass topped display cases covered the floor in the autograph room of the Library. Contained in the cases were the handwritten works and letters of the English literary greats, as well as many foreign writers' and composers' manuscripts: Charles Dickens, James Joyce, W. B. Yeats, John Keats, Milton, Dante, Michaelangelo, Galileo, DaVinci, Handel, Beethoven, Mozart, Swift, Defoe, Lewis Carroll, the Brownings.

These did not concern me at the moment. I was there for the one-fifteen lecture on something known as The Scrope Davies Find, a literary discovery that has many people excited and ramifications which have not yet been fully fathomed, or even well publicized.

The security guards, who double as guides or vice versa, were dressed in navy blue uniforms with brimmed hats. One was standing next to a sign about the one-fifteen lecture to be given by a man named Victor Lucas. The guide was about fifty-five years of age, with gray hair and silver rimmed glasses. Working in the museum kept his complexion pale.

I waded through a group of Japanese men with cameras. I think I saw them in the Egyptian Room the other day.

Reaching the guide, I asked, "Will the lecture be right here?"

"Right around those cases," he said, pointing across the room. A young man rushed up from that direction asking how to get to the main entrance. The guide pointed left and the young man rushed off with a cursory "thanks" without receiving the verbal instructions, which followed nevertheless in his wake.

"I hate it when they do that," said the guide, with an exasperated smile, nervous because of his confession.

I nodded. "Do you think Mr. Lucas would mind if I recorded his lecture?"

"I don't think so. It doesn't make any noise, does it?"

"No." I turned it on for the sake of demonstration.

"Have you heard Mr. Lucas before? He is quite good! He has acted in a number of films, you know?"

Really?"

"Yes indeed."

A voice boomed a few feet behind me. "Ladies and Gentlemen, please." I turned. "Gather around these cases . . ."

The lecture had begun. I thanked the guide and stepped over to the cases. Victor Lucas, mustachioed and distinguished, was a very dynamic man with a deep English accent. His speech was punctuated with confident dramatic gestures.

"I was told that we would have some special visitors with us today," Mr. Lucas said.

A man raised his hand.

"Ah, yes. And you are, sir?"

"Scrope Davies was my great uncle," said the man who raised his hand.

"Very good to have you here, sir! I would be interested in talking to you after the lecture, please," said Mr. Lucas.

Surveying the crowd, he began, "We are quite proud to have something as exciting as the Scrope Davies Find here in the National Library. You see, it is usually the British Museum's opposition, that has such fine discoveries . . ."

• • •

The Scrope Davies Find has to do with the poets Bysshe Shelley and Lord George Gordon Byron and their circle of friends, which included the man Scrope Davies. The find was a leather trunk containing some papers that had been in Scrope Davies' possession before he left London for Paris. But the best place to start the story would be after Lord Byron's divorce from a Miss Milbanke, a divorce which precipitated many rumors, primarily concerning Byron's relationship to his half-sister, Augusta Leigh.

Lord Byron made his exit from London, never to return, the divorce, leaving Annabella Milbanke Byron with a daughter named Augusta Ada. He spent the summer of 1816 on the shores of Lake Geneva with Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley (later to be Shelley's wife), and her step-sister, Clairemont. Shelley and Byron spent much time together, Byron endeavouring to disengage himself from Clairemont, who was pregnant by him. He allowed Claire to copy some of his poems to keep her occupied.

On August 26, Byron's two closest friends, John Hobhouse and Scrope Berdmore Davies, visited him. He had known them both since the Cambridge days and Davies was a fellow of King's College, Cambridge. Scrope Davies had loaned Byron £4800 for a Mediterranean jaunt with Hobhouse in 1809, from which arose some of Byron's poetry. His interest in the Mediterranean area would continue through the rest of his life, particularly his interest in Greece.

Davies and Hobhouse were Dandies, members of the generation that tyrannically held forth from such clubs as Woburn, Brook's, and Watiers. Byron says of them, "I liked the Dandies; they were always very civil to me . . . I knew them all my life, and they made me a member of Watiers (a superb club that time) . . ."

Shelley was not so attracted to the frivolity of the Dandies nor to the Dandy qualities that frequently appeared in himself. There is a story about a trip to Scotland taken by Davies and Hobhouse. On the journey, they bet on events that they came across, even the throwing of stones. The Dandies' love of gambling, family fortunes were at stake, can be demonstrated in a couple of tales.

There was a popular gambling game among the Dandies known as Hazard, which depended completely on the throw of the dice. One young man bet his whole newly acquired fortune on the outcome of a roll. Upon losing, he grasped

edge of the table tight in his teeth, and died. The clamp of his jaws was so strong that he could not be removed. Whether they cut the table or took the more gruesome course, I do not know.

A happier story tells of a man who, after an unusual streak of luck, collected his winnings, went to the hotel next door, paid for his room and board ten years in advance, and returned to the tables of ten years of carefree gambling.

In his friends Davies and Shelley, Byron saw a chance for insuring the safe delivery of some of his poems to his publisher in London, John Murray. Shelley was given a copy of the third canto to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* in Claire's hand and Scrope Davies received a copy in Byron's own hand to deliver upon their return. Claire's transcript contained an additional stanza, fuller notes, and these instructions: "This copy is to be printed from—subject to comparison with the original MS (from which this is a transcription) in such parts as it may chance be difficult to decipher in the following."

Shelley delivered his copy. Davies, described by Byron as being of "inaccurate memory," did not deliver his.

In 1820 Scrope won £ 20,000, then lost it and more. He fled London to escape his creditors, and spent his last thirty years, poverty stricken, in Paris, dying in 1852. Before his exit from London, he left a leather trunk in the care of his bankers, Messrs. Morland, Ransom, and Company at 1 Pall Mall East, just off Trafalgar Square. Ransom and Company became a part of Barclay's Bank around the end of the nineteenth century, and in 1976, while cleaning out one of the vaults, Scrope Davies' trunk was found and opened. Inside were tradesmen's accounts, bank statements, legal papers relating to debts, betting slips, promissory notes, twenty letters from Byron to Davies (1809-1819), letters from Hobhouse, Charles Skinner Matthews, Thomas Moore, Augusta Leigh (Byron's half-sister), Lady Caroline Lamb, Lady Frances Webster. But most importantly, there was the manuscript to *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* and a transcript in Claire's hand of *The Prisoner of Chillon*.

The *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* MS gives datings not contained elsewhere, emendations and deletions, plus the political footnotes which Byron suppressed.

The appearance of *The Prisoner of Chillon* in Claire's hand seems to have answered a question previously unsolved by scholars and handwriting experts. Byron's messy penmanship on line 268 in the manuscript used before the Scrope Davies Find could be read as either

a lovely bird, with azure wings,

a lonely bird, with azure wings.

Indeed, all the anthologies read it as "a lovely bird." Claire's neat hand, however, renders the line as

a lonely bird, with azure wings.

Also in the trunk was a notebook in the hands of Mary and Shelley containing Shelley's *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*, *Mont Blanc*, and two unknown poems, dated in the summer of 1816. One of these unknown poems is titled *To Laughter*. It is tempting to interpret the poem as a stab at the mocking laughter of the Dandies, particularly in reference to the visit of Davies and Hobhouse to Lake Geneva. But, in fact, Shelley and his party returned to London before Davies and Hobhouse arrived. The last lines of *To Laughter* read

I, now alone, weep without shame to see

How many broken hearts lie bare to thee.

The complete contents of Scrope Davies' leather trunk have not yet been fully examined, so we can expect a few more surprises. These discoveries will undoubtedly change and add

to the anthologies of both poets, as well as enrich the knowledge we have of their lives. Scrope Davies has dug himself a little place in literary history, too, in spite of or because of his "inaccurate memory."

• • •

The guide walked over to me after the lecture, while I was examining the display cases.

"How did you like it?"

"Very much," I said. "He speaks very well."

"Have you heard his lecture on the Magna Carta?" he asked.

"No, I haven't."

"That one is in the morning at eleven fifteen. You should try to hear it."

"I would like to. Thank you!"

The guide strolled away with his hands behind his back. I prepared to take a few pictures; my first excursion outside the realm of the pocket instamatic, into the world of the 50 mm camera. First, you unlock this and keep this pushed in . . . see if the little line is on the C . . . change the light setting from 60 to 30 and twist the focus . . . get the whole case in the picture . . . don't pay any attention to the Japanese man watching and smiling . . . steady . . . snap. What? . . . It's all black in there. The shutter must have stuck. Crap! I had better get back to the hotel and tell Craig that I broke his camera . . .

• • •

Thanks to the British Museum, the National Library, Mr. Victor Lucas, the museum guide, and whoever types the little information cards for the display cases.

## TO LAUGHTER

My friends were never mine thou heartley find;  
Silence and solitude and calm and storm  
Hope, before whose veiled shrine all spirits bend  
In worship and the rainbow vested form  
Of conscience, that within thy hollow heart  
Can find no throne—the love of such great powers  
Which has required mine as many hours  
Of loneliness, thou ne'er hast felt; depart!

Thou canst not bear the moon's great eye, thou fearest  
A fair child clothed in miles aught that is high  
Or good or beautiful—thy voice is dearest  
Of those who mock at birth and innocence  
I, now alone, weep without shame to see  
How many broken hearts lie bare to thee.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

Reprinted from the Scrope Davies Find in the British Museum.



# FICTION

## Two Tired from the Road

by John Benenati

They called it the free wind, but most of the time it was a cold breeze. It was indeed a strange force. Never seen, but no matter which direction you were traveling, it always seemed to be there in your face, resisting any attempt at speed that you made. An eternal, round-the-compass headwind, a vortex of opposing force centered around the lone rider; something to do with Newton's third law.

It all gets too confusing. All that mattered was the road, the rolling road. You get caught in a revolving world of spokes, pedals, tires, chainwheels, and cranks. You are stationary. The wind holds you there, and the earth rotates beneath your wheels, relatively speaking. If that whirling madness were to stop, if the road somehow strayed out from under your wheels, you would be no more. Just keep something moving straight ahead.

It was going to be a cold night for Jason; the sallow glow of the stars in the cloud-forsaken heavens indicated this rather clearly. Two hundred and fifty miles was enough movement for one day. What he needed was someone to ride with him so that they could take turns battling the wind. All that spinning and turning and seating and breathing and eating and drinking, when would it end? Another day, the same road. The worm gear of time constantly turning.

Things would always get like this at night when the road had been a bit challenging. Weariness was his only companion and she sang only sad songs. He was tired of it.

"Begone Lady Lethargy. I have no need for your lonely laments. Where are the meadowlarks and nightingales when one needs them? Home tending their families no doubt. Alas. Let me lay my head down here beside this brook, and let the noise of the falling, swirling water wash away the wears of the world."

Down out of the rock-laden hills they rode, the hooves of their horses striking hard at the stones beneath. A cloud of dust and smoke rose to the occasion. Shadows they had none. The killers three rode at the side of the dead king. Horses, painted red and black, with nostrils flared and eyes gorged with blood, saliva mixing with the dust, slaving down their gaunt jaws. The wraithly riders had no faces. The smell of death hung heavy in the still air.

They were after meat; raw dripping flesh. It was an ancient curse that had been placed on the hillspeople by a demented wizard. Once every full moon the dead king and his riders would rise, up, mount their hellish steeds, and descend upon the town, terrorizing the villagers. They were in search of virginal plunder. No locks, bolts, or bars could stay their entry, not even prayer. They always got what they wanted. Arms, and legs, and all that came in between.

It was hard for Jason to get started the next morning; something that he had dreamed was bothering him. Or maybe it was just the rock that he had tried to use for a pillow. It had proved to be quite intractable. Clouds were conspiring against the sun, and the blackness that was piling up in the north portended trouble in the form of a cold rain. No matter, he had gotten wet before, and he would probably get wet again.

The first few miles were always the hardest. The inertia the night gave a rubbery, rheumatic resistance to his legs was hard overcome. The cold in the ground had seeped into leg muscles and deep into the joints. The sun, if present, would help in mitigating this problem, but the best solution was spin—legs, ankles, feet, pedals, cranks; and to spin fast.

It felt good once his cadence fell in place alongside that of day and the seasons. Crouching over the bars, exposing as frontal area to the wind as possible, sometimes with a relaxed, watching the up-down-up-down reciprocating motion of his feet, maintaining a narrow edge of balance; it would have been hard for him to trade the deeply pleasing quality of this experience for anything that existed formally, eminently, or objectively in the world; even the idea of God, or his life.

The sky was not getting any clearer or brighter, as was wont on summer mornings, nor was the wind that was out of the north making any sort of contribution to the general pleasantness of the day. It looked like rain, smelled like rain. The clouds were glorying in their reign of semi-darkness.

He didn't have enough time or energy to be concerned with such inevitabilities as the weather at that time. A more immediate concern was getting to the top of the hill that he was climbing over. The end was not in sight, so that he could not tell how long it was, but it looked to be rather steep. Still, he was assured of, that he would no longer be struggling by the time he reached the top. Tired, maybe.

He climbed up out of the saddle and made his arms and upper body contribute their share to the power of his rocking the bike side to side, calf muscles aching, struggling against another unseen force-gravity. Smooth, steady, strength; that was the answer. Keep things moving, inexorably up the hill. He didn't even think about or look for the Discouragement would be no help. A slow crawl was better than no crawl. He was bound to get to the end eventually.

The road rounded a sharp left up ahead and disappeared between the trees. Since he had never been in this part of the country before, he did not know whether he would have to continue climbing or if he would be blessed with an adrenalin-driving descent, or even a brief respite. He did not even know what destination the road would take him to, but there was one way to find out, round the corner.

What ho! Glory be! The bane of the meek of heart, the blood of the reckless (who were not all that wreckless)—a mile downhill with trucks being admonished to use low gears. The clammy film of sweat he had transpired on the uphill climb was beginning to assume ice-cubic dimensions as his rider hurtled down the hill. As his speed showed signs of aspiring to light and its velocity, he became consumed by driving excitement that inspired a great grin to display toothfully, across his face, to anyone in the world. The downhill like this one that made all those long struggles worthwhile. Even if they never did seem to last long enough. What he tried to do was to maintain as much momentum as possible on the downhill in preparation for the next up-



Since he did not know quite where he was going, there was no real reason for him to go so fast; he might wreck. But it was so much more fun that way, and, besides, he would get there quicker.

The bottom had arrived sooner than he had hoped, as usual, and it was soon time again to exert and expend, making his way down the long road. At least the road was level now and he had a clear and distinct memory of a decent descent to sustain him for awhile. He now had time to consider the vicissitudes in the weather that the tenebrous clouds were insinuating. Yes, it looked like rain. The sky had not gotten any lighter since he had started out, worse if anything, and anyone who was exposed and unprotected would more than likely be quite wet before the day was through. It was very hard to stay dry while riding a bike in the rain. If your clothing was waterproof it kept the rain out but it also kept the sweat in and you would be soaked from within. Hard to find an acceptable go-between. So let it rain, it had been a while since he had had a good bath anyway.

His head had been bent over his bars, and he had been busy watching his back tire spinning around and around, pushing him along, when he had first passed the bicyclist with the disabled bike at the side of the road. But the sun had very opportunely forced its way through the clouds long enough for it to catch Jason's eye as it glinted off the spokes of the disabled bike. His first reaction was to keep pushing straight ahead (he who strays from his appointed path being lost,) but there was something about the shine of those spokes that turned his head, stainless steel double-butted, no doubt. And it would have been very unchivalrous if he had just kept riding, although there probably wasn't all that much that he would be able to do; nightly errantry not being his specialty. He turned about.

Reapproaching the cyclist with the disabled bike, he noticed that both wheels had been removed from the machine, with the tires laying on the ground like limp sausages nearby. The bicyclist was chokingly sobbing as he sat cross-legged on the ground with his head between his knees.

"Halloo! Have a flat?"

"No thanks, just had two. Virginial silks they were too. Now totally worthless, cut to shreds, wasted. Damn them." Sob.

"Whom? The tires?"

"No, the Nazgul, the Black Riders. They almost ran me up the ditch as they rode past and the last one threw handfuls of broken beer bottle glass onto the road in front of my tires. After I stopped they came circling back like a pack of vultures after a carrion and I was forced to fend them off with my tire pump. So here I am with two flats and no spares."

The Nazgul, a bad lot these. They wore shorts, shoes, and their jerseys that were stained with the darkness of nightmares past, with jagged slashes of red down the sides. They hung around in packs, rode in packs, and made it their avocation to deride and terrorize fellow bicyclists. It was even rumoured that they resorted to driving ten ton semis and pickup trucks if there was a particular rider that they were out to get. They took a special interest in female riders. They tried to make the rules of the road theirs. A few half-hearted attempts had been made by the local law enforcement folk to disband these bad-news bikies, but they had been to no avail.

"How long ago did your mishap happen?"

"Oh, I don't know. I guess I've only been here long enough to look at my shredded tires, and cry. Probably five minutes or so before you got here."

Well, it was up to him to provide what succor he could.

Jason was only carrying one spare tire with him, and it was only a lowly cotton. It had been given to him by his mother on his twenty first birthday, so he was reluctant to part with it. But duty called, and no dastard or recreant knight he, he offered it to the disabled cyclist.

"Thank you, kind sir, but one is not enough, I need two."

Yes, this was indeed true. The bicyclist needed two to tango. The only thing left for him to do was to ride ahead to the next town, find a bike shop that sold tubulars, and somehow persuade someone to bring two new silks back to the misfortunate, upset bicyclist.

"Then I shall ride to the next town and see if I can find some shop there with the things that you need."

"Oh, would you, most gracious friend? I would be forever grateful. It looks as if it's going to rain and I would hate to be stranded here, all alone, in the middle of a cold rain. If I ever get a chance to repay your kindness . . ."

A bolt of lightning, followed closely by a thundering explosion, cut short the bicyclist's offer of gratitude.

"Oh, hurry, please hurry . . . back."

So Jason rode off towards the next town with as good a speed as he could manage against the gusty wind that was now blowing. Damn head wind again.

Back? He had not even considered going back. He figured that he would be able to find someone in the town that had nothing better to do but bring the silks back to the cyclist. After all, he had someplace to go, someplace down the road. Not back. No, he could not turn back. It would break the rhythm of his journey, his quest. He would lose some time; heaven forbid.

And there was something unusual about that disabled cyclist. He must have been real young for his voice had not changed yet. He did not even have a beard to cover his comely visage. Instead of having bulging muscles, his legs were smooth and even rather shapely. The cyclist was unmanly enough to cry, and forever beseeching. Despite all this, somewhere deep inside, where Jason kept those things he called emotions under lock and key, he sensed a certain liking for the disabled cyclist that he could not explain sufficiently. He was probably just feeling a strong empathy for a fellow wayfarer.

Years of riding had deadened him to the leaden excretions of fatigue in his legs. The mind just detaches itself from the body and stands back, observing the various biochemical machinations that produce movement, kinetic energy. It was the only way that he had learned to tolerate such things, and it was satisfying, albeit, perversely so perhaps.

There was a rider up ahead. From the color scheme of his vestments, Jason could tell that it was one of the Nazgul, probably one of the group that had molested the disabled cyclist. This made him mad. There was no sign of the others.

He caught up with the Nazgulan and surmised from the bulges in the back pockets of his jersey that this was the one that had thrown the broken beer bottle glass onto the road. Something had to be done about his kind. Someone had to show them what ignoble dastards they were. From the odor that was trailing behind him, someone should also give them some soap. He pulled up alongside the Black Rider.

"Good morning, sir. How far be it to the next town?"

The Nazgulan looked to his left and replied, with a steely countenance, "Fifteen miles." The Black Riders were not known for their heartiness and good cheer, especially if caught alone.

"How far have you ridden today? Did you happen by a fellow cyclist with tire trouble?"

The Nazgulan just shook his head and kept riding.

The responses of the Nazgulan, and the lack thereof, angered Jason. Even if this one had not been in the group that had molested the disabled cyclist, he deserved to be rebuked for his dastardly behavior.

"Sir, I challenge you to a race to the next town. What say you?"

The Black Rider leered, nodded his head, and started spinning his cranks faster and faster.

The race was on. The conspiring clouds saw their chance, took unfair advantage, and began discharging their innards at the riders. The wind also joined in the conspiracy, guaranteeing a treacherous race.

The Black Rider looked strong, but Jason had been riding hard for quite a while, ever since the world began, or so it seemed to him, and he felt confident that he could beat any one of the vile and contemptible Nazgul. The Nazgulan started out pulling lead while Jason drafted off him close behind, letting his opponent do most of the work, resting until he got a chance to sprint by. The stench there was strong even though it was being washed away by the rain. If Jason had been able to stay there, he could have let the Black Rider tire himself out fighting the wind, weakening his final sprint so that Jason would not have had any problem getting by. But Jason did not like perpetual wheel-sucking. There was also the matter of the sparks (in the rain?) and bits of broken glass that were flying past his eyes. Jason wanted to lodge a protest, but there were no judges in sight.

They'd done ten miles in the rain. Jason had tried to overtake the Black Rider five times and was thwarted each time, almost totalled twice. The Black Rider would swerve to the side in an effort to knock him into the ditch each time Jason had tried to get by. An evil wind. He had to get by somehow. He knew he could drop the Black Rider off the back now if he could just get by.

It was on a steep downhill that he finally managed to pass the Black Rider. He had waited until the top of the hill, climbed hard out of his saddle, and pulled up alongside the panting Nazgulan. As he passed by, Jason caught another glimpse of his visage—he was wearing the mask of a horse. The hideous look of this thing had startled Jason, and the slugs of adrenalin that were generated by this sight gave him an extra bit of energy catapulting him down the road. The Black Rider had taken a swipe at him with his pump when he had seen him going by but it was too late.

Jason was now home free, sprinting. No more impediments, just the free wind, and the raw, searing energy of the lightning. Only three miles to go. No hassle, he had sustained full sprints for five miles, or even a bit more, before. Maybe not in the rain. But it was fun; the water on the road parting beneath his tires, rooster-tailing his back.

One mile to go. Jason could almost see his goal in the distance; the ghostly, wavering phantom of a town in the rain. A black figure transited his left orbit and assumed a position directly in front of him. Another slid into position on his left side. Looking behind, Jason spied another one there. He was boxed in, helpless. He had to sit there and watch his opponent glide by with great facility. Foiled again.

Jason was now required to yield unto them; the rules of the road. Even if they had cheated. There was nothing he could do.

They grimaced and leered as they discussed amongst themselves what destiny would be Jason's. It was starting to rain harder. They had decided on a suitable desert. The ugliest one of them, the one with the mean case of the black and blue

meanies, lurched up to Jason and said "Tough luck, huh? har. You must now do as we deem fit." His breath was foul. "We have imprisoned a lady in a castle that is over the hundred miles north of here. She is to be ours if you do reach her by the time that half of the moon has set on northern horizon. She shall soon be pedalling for us. Har har. You do not make it in time your legs will become arthritic, your ligaments will wither. Go ye. And may the rain melt sugar on your wings of love, Icarus. Har har."

Another victim? Not Jason. His contrary nature would see his retaliation to the very end. He was sure that he had been in worse situations, could not remember quite when. The hundred miles, and then some perhaps. Since it was not noon, that gave him eleven hours or so, at about twenty seconds a mile an hour, and a step. He was not to be defeated utterly even against the wind and rain. Damn the torpedoes, speed ahead.

It was now time for all those years of practice to show their mettle. Jagged lines of pain took on an abstract appearance, detached, watching himself as his legs pushed him down the road as fast as his muscles could metabolize. His sweat mixing with cold rain. He had to make it. Suicide would be only recourse if he was to turn into the crippled, aged remnant that the Black Riders had said he would if he lost. No mention the lady's, whoever she was, loss of her honor and defilement.

The afternoon hours spun into days and the days into months. Jason was riding a lifetime's worth of miles in the afternoon. The crust of years was slowly peeling away. There was no end to the road. It was just a great circle encompassing his life. No lefts, no rights, and no dead ends. Would the rain and the wind ever diminish, would his tires hold up? He had doubts; man's scourge. It made no difference as long as he kept his pedals twirling. Twirling.

It had been dark so long that he could not remember light. The cunning, cimbersons clouds had obscured the sun and rainbows; little bits of beauty. He had to light his way with whatever light he could conjure up inside his head. What lady, what was she like? Was she beautiful? Of course she was. Was she intelligent? Anybody that resisted the Nazgul would have some sort of sense about them. Was she strong? Was she obsessed with bicycles? He hoped so.

Would he make it? He had no way of telling how far he had come, or how far he had to go. From the position of the sun he could tell that he did not have much time left. He was making excuses to himself for his sad plight and for his failed his quest. Had they broken his spirit? Those dashed lines had not played fairly. The rain and the wind were on their reinforcing their efforts to break him down. End or no end, he could not figure out why he continued. He was cold, tired, and getting dizzy; the world was starting to spin on a new axis. He just wanted to stop riding and lay down at the edge of the road and sleep. If he could just close his eyes, even in the dark anyway, he would be unconscious of the outside world and he would only have himself to fend for. His bike handlebars and his tires threw mud and grit into his face and chain.

No more pedalling, no more running. This was it; the end of the night. He had forgotten something, something was missing. A grave calmness had settled on the world. The wind was gone. The rain? Gone, beyond. A becalmed pool of forgetfulness replaced them. He heard laughter in the distance behind him. Were the gods laughing at him again? Possible, anything was possible.



But it crept, getting closer. There was also an eerie glow catching up with him. This usually indicated the nearing of a car, but when he looked back all that he could see was a luminous body. If he could just make it to the top of the next hill, maybe he could lose these spectres on the downhill.

No, no way. The hill had suddenly gotten steeper; too steep. No more energy; reserves exhausted; no source of replenishment. All for naught. The castle and the lady might be just the other side of this hill, but he just couldn't make it. No way. He had been caught from behind. The laughter was now almost palpable. The shadow of his bike fell on the wet pavement ahead of him. This was it.

He turned to his left to stare into the mad, moonglow eyes of death as it overcame him. His eyes were met by something other than what he had expected; he could not take them away. Weariness left his body, like the tide ebbing in Fundy, in waves. A new source of energy; natural, radiant beauty. The confounding fogs of the night were dispelled. His path was lit again, this time by a brighter but unknown source. His mind may have been deceiving him in his delirium, but he thought not. Was that a slight tail wind that he felt blowing along his thighs?

A fellow bicyclist pulled up alongside him. Who was it? It looked like the disabled cyclist of the morning, but something was different, altered. This one was riding a gleaming white bike, and her blonde hair was swirling out from beneath her

helmet.

It was a girl, yet it was the same disabled cyclist of the morning. How different she looked at night! She was laughing and beaming smiles, her eyes glinting in the moonlight.

"How did you get here and why are you laughing?" Jason demanded.

"As to why I'm laughing," she replied, "it's because I could see your thoughts back there and how absurdly serious they were." She laughed. "As to how I got here, that's a long, long story, starting somewhere in the dimness of the past. Suffice it to say that I was captured by three Nazgul this morning and I contrived my escape from their clutches when they chained my bike and I to a tree. I have been riding since."

"But where are you headed?"

"I have been following the light ahead of me."

"But there hath been no light here."

She just looked at him and shifted into a higher gear, as they had already topped the hill and were now soaring down. She took the lead and the two of them moved with the smooth precision of an Olympic time trial team. Jason now had someone to help him battle the wind. They could take turns.

No more cold rains, headwinds that he would have to face alone. But the changes of tires, of bike, of rider's appearance, of the escape? He could not explain these things. Must be magic. He just laughed and kept riding. And of the lady at the end of the highway, was this not she?

## IT'S THE KIND OF THING WE SHOULD DO

It's the kind of thing we should do,  
Not merely sit on the bed in awkwardness  
The hand on the knee signifying  
That things will eventually take place  
And what about precedence?  
Seems everyone has it but me.  
We need the proper location,  
the proper attire.  
Apart from others.

Toulouse Street. Royal. Summer. Rain.  
We'd go walking and not be able to escape it.  
Lost in the drops. Soaked voile to the skin and shivering.  
You'd welcome warming me: the dress plastered wet and  
hanging on two small stick-out points, symmetrical and obviously intact.  
And your haircurls, galore, like the time at the beach and your  
long-sleeved white shirt unbuttoned and the look of perspiration lent by  
the rain on your brown skin.

Browsing in the Lemon Tree and looking into the lushness of the Royal Sonesta  
And eating marzipan tarts from the bakery.  
Wet with the knowledge of man and motion and how the circumstances  
perfect the moment:

The slapping of the rain on scalloped tin roofs, the traffic  
noise, the pause at crosswalks, your gentle elbow-lifting that takes  
is off the curb, the greetings of black white-eyed bartenders peering  
out corner doors—waiting to open, the midday bustle of elderly ladies  
who remind us never to come to New Orleans without an umbrella.

To be caught in the rain and shining in the eyes as headlights that  
glare on the pavement.

ELLEN FARMER

## THE RIVER RAT

Swam, the river rat swam  
Up the fire field in morn,  
No waterlog doldrums, flinging  
And bobbing as it was born.

So soon, so soon for the river  
Rat riding the crest of  
Simplicity, ducking the rush  
Yet feigning sea wrack at best.

Quit, the river rat quit  
Down the fire field in gloaming,  
Kissing a nail, mating the  
Halo-struck moon in roaming.

Define, connote for the rat  
The fire, nail, field about,  
Why riptides surge for sadness  
Momentarily, flicker, and flow out.

DOUG SMOOT

## ARTIST

Gloved in night, swan  
Necked lamps  
Let

their  
down  
light  
Cement sidewalk.

GARY BOLICK



# Jane

by Mary McNeil

Lord, that sky was blue, and sitting on Old Jane with that breeze, you know the kind that smells like leaves falling and pumpkins growing and dozens of black birds flying south, was just cooling me off all over. I couldn't figure out why I didn't do this more often. The thoughts of sitting in that Miss Casey's dust-filled classroom with Shakespeare (who I couldn't make heads or tails of anyway) coming at me from all sides just about made my stomach turn. Never ceased to amaze me how folks could actually enjoy sitting inside all stuffy-like when they knew sooner than not it'd be too wicked cold to venture outside more than to run down to the mailbox and hurry back without frost chewing at your fingers and toes.

I shouldn't talk much, though; I'd started out the day the same way. Ma jolting me out of bed with a shake and shoving me full of lumpy cream of wheat before I had both eyes fully open. I even made it through geometry in the morning only three-fourths asleep, which is an achievement few even with strong characters and deep moral convictions can barely accomplish as far as I'm concerned. But at lunch break I made my escape clean and simple. I'd been giving old Meg the look all morning over in the third row. It was my stare at her long enough to know she's looking without really catching your eyeball face to face look. I wanted to start her thinking that I was up to somethin's all. By eleven o'clock she knew.

I sauntered up to her as she was unraveling an old bologna sandwich from her waxed paper out in the parking lot. I must admit she didn't look too excited about her lunch (can't say I blame her) and neither about the afternoon full of some King of Denmark going insane and killing everybody. Meg was a good kid. She and I used to get stuck climbing up bales of hay together—or at least she kept falling down and then I'd come tumbling down on top of her and things just started going from there. She'd even let me get a good kiss or two on the lips if I didn't act too rambunctious about it.

"How about forgetting this place and taking out old Jane for a little ride?" I said to her, acting nonchalant as if I could care less if she went or not, even though she always was good company, "All we got to do is run off now, nobody'll know, we'll slip up to my house, Daddy'll be at the store and Ma, she's so busy keeping little Timmy straight she won't ever notice me getting Jane out."

Well, Meg looks at me like she's dying to go (Meg always was fun) and says, "But Andy, that Miss Casey will know we've gone off again and probably call Mama and that'll mean dishes alone for the next month."

I just gave her that look again (like I didn't care, it's never failed me yet) and just like I thought, she exclaims how a ride would be nice on such a beautiful day—you know sunny and cool and all. Meg, no, you couldn't fool her. She was right up with the guys about knowing what's really worth it. So, off we went, sneaked to the barn, saddled Jane and plugged off first slowly so as to get Jane all warmed up.

Now, I got to tell you about Jane. She was a four year old mare, brown like the color of our old mahogany chest in the

dining room, all polished and rich looking. Her ears and were pitch black and kind of highlighted her handsome. But if I made a list of all these things in this world that me more than a nickel to me, Jane would be up there at the top ahead of playing for the New York Yankees, or spending the rest of my life catching trout over by Sawyer's mill. I just plain loved old Jane, running over the hills by our house with head high and me clinging to her neck at a full gallop. I knew that if the devil asked me, I'd give him my soul for Jane and our rides together.

My Daddy had once tried to take her to one of his meetings last year. He said they were going to need horses for their job that night but I wouldn't let him take Jane. I saw and cursed and threatened I'd go jump off the Alexander bridge if he took Jane to one of those meetings with all the torches and yellin' that went on. So he finally ended up taking the truck and I calmed down enough to at least pretend to go to sleep. That horse—well, she was worth more than any horse to me.

Anyway, to get back to where I started, Meg and I had been sitting atop old Jane for most of the afternoon and had ridden over half the country. We stopped down by the mill and trying to be philosophical for awhile. It began to get dark and started getting kind of worried about Meg's mother and started thinkin' about all those dirty dishes so I said we'd better start heading back. The dark began to fall on us when we got to the Alexander Bridge which made me more uneasy before—I knew Jane didn't like the black. I told Meg to get down and we'd lead Jane across seeing's how horses are scared much for bridges and I didn't want Jane to get all mad and nervous anyway. Well, we started off, over on the edge as far as we could go, walking single file with Meg out front and me leading Jane.

We were just about over when I see these two headlights coming down the road. But I kept on walking, half talking to Meg and Jane. Jane was used to cars so I didn't mind much about it. But these lights sneaked up on us awful fast before I knew it were right next of us. Well, it even scared me so close and making all kinds of noises and I reckon I was just about scared to death cause she shied and took two steps sideways with her back legs out into the road.

But you see I was holding on to her and her eyes started right in the face when I heard the thud and bejees I thought my heart was doing jumping jacks I just couldn't think straight. Both Jane's back legs were broke by that truck and she was hard. Meg, by God, that girl always had spunk, yelling and truck to stop and runs over to help old Jane.

I just kind of stood there, didn't know much what to do, afraid to touch Jane or even get near her. I was just going inside like an old tornado. You see, Jane was trying to get up on her broken legs and, Lord, I've never seen anything hurtin' in my life. The truck came to a stop over the bridge and didn't much notice at first after I got my head a little straighter went over to calm Jane and keep her from trying so hard to hurt herself more. I was okay then, I mean my eyes kept running, but Jane was so calm and laid with her head on her lap peaceful like she wasn't feeling what I knowed she must be.

Then it hit me, angry and mad and wanting to punch or scream or just plain kill whoever had done this to my baby. So I look up and who's standing there but a man, big and night, with an old beat-up jacket and overalls on. He's just standing there and I thought to myself well it figures out dumb, stupid, worthless nigger had done this to my baby would have shot him right there if I'd had a gun. I never

niggers, my Daddy never liked niggers, his Daddy had never liked niggers and now one had broke my Janey's legs.

"Gosh, boy, I's sorrah 'bout your horse," he says, kind of shaking all over, "I's in a hurry, couldn't slow down and I didn't see you's all. I's frightened you see, they can't know I's goin' this way or the's going's catch me for sure, you won't tell the's, will ya? I feel sickly 'bout your pooh horse, honest I do."

Well, I wished he'd quit jabbering, I wanted to string him up right there except he looked so scared and pathetic and my head wasn't straight. About this time Janey starts scrapin' her teeth on the pavement she's in such pain and I was hurting inside something terrible.

"I's got to go now. Please don't tell them. My wife's waiting for me. I swear I didn't mean to hurt her, I just gotta go. Please, boy, help me."

And with that, the nigger ran to his truck and took off up the road quick as could be.

Well, I just kind of sat there and Meg sat there and we waited cause there wasn't much left to do. I couldn't get my thoughts straight in my head and that nigger made no sense to me except that I hated him worse than Satan.

I guess maybe 20 minutes went by when a whole line of cars come down the road. Meg flagged 'em down cause I couldn't leave Janey. It was all the men from the town, couldn't figure out what they were all doing until I remembered there'd been a meeting that night. It came to me that my Daddy said they had some business to take care of but I hadn't paid much attention to it—I never seemed to.

Questions kept coming at me left and right. Mr. Leatherburn telling me what a shame poor old Janey. Doc Smiley coming over and saying Janey was a shooter, which I figure, anyway. Ben Jackson, with his one tooth grin, kept asking me what had happened, who had hit old Janey, poor thing, and I just kind of stand there telling them to shoot my Janey now cause I couldn't car that hit her, with her laying there suffering like that as if they didn't care what she was going through. Finally I say's I wasn't telling anything until they put Janey out of her misery so they brought out a gun and I turned away and they shot my old Janey. That kind of started me shaking, even though I was glad she was out of it.

Well, they pounced on me again about the car, asking Meg, too, but she just kept quiet as a mouse, said she didn't know anything.

To this day that I live, I'll never reckon why I did what I did right then. Maybe it was Janey being gone and them not caring, but I stopped my shaking, turned to my Daddy's friends and without a flinch said, "Judge Whiter hit my mare with his car about half-hour ago. He was driving home from court and didn't see us crossing the bridge. Janey jumped clean out in front of him, couldn't be stopped, and I know he felt awful bad about it, just as I do. He drove ahead to get some help."

"Nobody else has been by here, Andy, no other cars passed you in the last half hour?" they asked.

"Not a one."

Well they starts getting in a group and discussing and pointing fingers in all directions. Finally Mr. Leatherburn comes up and says they're on important business and seems they took the wrong road but they had to get going again. And my dead Janey lying on the road all the time.

"We'll send someone to take care of the horse and pick you up," he said. "But we got to be going. We're all awful sorry about it. Know how you loved to ride her."

Then they all climbed in and drove off in a snake-like line and Meg and I were left there again so I could get my thoughts together.

And old Meg, she gives me that look, you know the kind that just cuts right through every fib you ever had the nerve to tell.

Well, I didn't like my ticker being exposed like that. It just wasn't safe. May black cats walk across every path of that black man, but you know what the trouble is—I just couldn't rat on that nigger myself. And I was glad I hadn't let Daddy take Jane to that meeting way back.

## WILD RABBITS

The fussy winds moved across the alfalfa field, making me think that herds of cottontails might be dashing across, like lightning-winged geese striking the sky: but the field was green and daddy warned me against whistling as I polished my shoes; everybody was going to church, and Daddy didn't want to go to church; "too many Goddamned stuck-up people," he explained which made Mama say Oh Buck: but I watched the waves across the hill, wishing for summer soon and hay-making; the tractor would clatter and cut the alfalfa into a shrinking square while us younguns would stand around and wait for rabbits to run, sometimes we caught them and tried to keep them for pets: but they would jump and bang their squealing heads against the screen until they wore their scalps away and we set them free before they killed themselves . . .

And the Sunday-school lesson was stupid that day, about Mr. and Mrs. Rabbit and their Bunnies blessing Jesus! Everybody knows Mr. Rabbit doesn't care about Jesus; let him alone, he'll always run anyway.

J. T. YORK





## The Prayer by Joseph Santi

After the final blessing, the priest asked the congregation to join in a special prayer. "Lord, make me an instrument of your peace," they began. The old church filled with the sound, although the attendance at this weekday mass was sparse. After the amen, the people smiled as they quietly exited. One man still knelt.

"Lord, make me an instrument of your peace." He repeated the words slowly and then more slowly to himself. "If only I could express myself like that," he thought. "If I could only communicate at all." He retired to his apartment. It was brown. There was a dusty green rug on the floor. The floorboards were sandy between the fringe of the rug and the molding. He rummaged through a dresser for an old yellow pad and a pen. He arranged the stuffing inside one of the lumpy maroon cushions of the couch and sat. He got as far as, "Lord."

But from that day, a task was his. He labored through one hundred yellow pads and broken pens. He crouched over a desk every moment he could. He prayed for guidance, but not with words. He merely knelt. He read thousands of prayers—as examples, for ideas. He listened carefully to every person he met; he waited for an inspiration.

"Check." There was a pause. "I said check."

"What? Oh, I'm sorry, Paul. What did you say?"

"I said check," and he pointed to a menacing black rook.

It was a warm summer evening and a quiet game of chess in the park was the only diversion he allowed himself. It had been a month since the idea had seized him. The game ended quickly and the friends sat back to enjoy the last rays of the sun, two good cigars, and a little conversation.

"I guess I wasn't much competition again tonight."

"You might say that."

The men spoke slowly as their age allowed them. Cool breezes enforced the lulls as both men hesitated to interrupt the pleasant effects of their passing.

"I'm sorry, but my mind's been somewhere else lately."

"I've noticed." He thought it over. "Something wrong?"

"Not really."

"Well?"

"It may sound strange to you. I—," there was a long cool breeze.

"It sure sounds strange. It sounds like nothing."

"All right. I just hope that I can explain it so you'll understand."

"I'm listening very carefully."

"The other day, it must have been a couple of months ago, I got this—well it wasn't really an idea. It was more of a desire, a desire to write, to write something."

"What something? A novel?"



"Oh no. I could never write a novel or anything like that. What I want to write is a prayer. I told you it might sound a little odd, but that's what I've decided."

"There are plenty of prayers, they come from the Bible, they're written by saints, they're not—I don't understand."

"That's just it. The old prayers are beautiful, but they are old. Nobody takes the trouble to listen anymore. But if I could capture their beauty with something important from today, then people would notice."

The men finished their cigars quietly. Darkness began to fill the crevices between the leaves of the trees. Paul slapped the board against the top of the box of chessmen. He stood, tugged up his belt and nodded, "I've been thinking, it may not be such a bad idea. Writing a prayer, to God, you know; well it's not the kind of thing He lets you fall short on."

"Right," he laughed and they said good night.

He stepped quickly back to his apartment. The neighborhood could be restless on a summer night. The shadow of the building, thrown from behind, fought an even battle with a streetlamp close by. Three young lives were, in turn, caught and hidden by the conflagration. The nose, the cheekbones, the forehead blazed as one leaned forward to pull the sliptop off an aluminum can. The features were suddenly lost when he turned to spit out the grit from the rim. He carefully skirted their bodies, sprawled as they were on the apartment house stoop. They followed his progress with their eyes and smiled at the fear they had seen.

Inside, behind the latch and bolt, he was free of that fear but captive of a different emotion. He took up the pen once more. It must be brief, he thought, concise enough to be memorized, but not short. It must have a rhythm, it must be fluid, but no so much that it could be branded poetry or even doggerel.

The same questions nudged him at every sitting. There were always questions. What type of prayer would it be? Would it be a petition of the Lord or a prayer of adoration? Could anything new be said of His power, could anything else be asked for? Would it be a prayer of thanksgiving? What had he to be thankful for?

The muscles in his neck were rapidly becoming cords. He grew steadily more and more uncomfortable. Yet, every day he devoted more time to his work. Choosing the words, consulting dictionaries, hunting through thesauruses, looking up better ways to say devotion, to say compassion, to say hope—these things filled his days. There was no family to miss him as he became increasingly withdrawn from the world. Paul found a new partner and lost a few matches.

He shut himself in, working hard and watching T.V. when frustration became too great. He huddled with those yellow pads. He tried to limit himself to a single subject. He discarded the question of right to life as being too controversial. Wisdom was too mundane. The problems of the old were too close to home and he didn't want to run the risk of diminishing his chances by writing a selfish prayer.

At last, he turned out his first complete prayer. It was discolored in his eyes—totally unoriginal and dull. He had followed all the rules he could think of and still produced nothing of value. It was time to write some more rules, to ask some new questions. He would know when it was perfect.

He threw the T.V. away, and then his radio. He would no longer feel guilty about yielding to distractions. Three young men turned a nice profit, making their own collection before the sanitation department could get to them.

He only left his two rooms to cash a check or attend Sunday mass. He grew thin and white. He forgot to sleep, he forgot to

eat. He forgot how to dial a phone, how to work a can opener, how to smile. It was September.

The days were shrinking, but he worked longer hours still. Progress was incredibly slow. A subject was selected, maybe. The length was decided, perhaps. Fifty or sixty failures were scattered through notebooks. It was Sunday again.

He pulled on what was left of his best clothes and interrupted his work to attend mass. Now it happened that Sunday joined with September to paint one of the most beautiful days of the year. The Indian Summer air was sweet and wet, even in the city, even with the sun shining brilliantly. The wind seemed to blow easily and from all directions at once. It was crisp and bright and glorious. He noticed. The mass was nearly half over when he was finally able to bring himself inside the church.

When the service was over he grabbed a collection envelope and a small pencil from the table in the back of the church and ran up the street to the park, tearing away the back flaps of the envelope as he went. Here was a new rule: his writing studio was to be God's great outdoors. He sat on the soft grass at the base of a young elm tree. Its burnt brown and yellow-gold awning shielded his work. Occasionally a leaf blew across the little piece of paper in his hand. It seemed, to him, to trace some marvelous word or phrase.

On that day he wrote the first two lines he was actually pleased with. He enjoyed his meal. He slept well. He carried his pad and pencil out now—watching the city and the people. He hoped to find more lines locked up in them. It was difficult. They were ice and stone. But occasionally someone would smile or someone would laugh and he would see them. He hurried home at night, the notes and scratchings of the day tucked under his coat.

"Did you see that guy?"

"He nearly stepped on my leg, the old jerk."

"First, you never see him. Now he's running around all the time."

"I wonder what he's up to man."

The work began to move.

*"Lord your mercy and power are*

*My strength is my devotion. . ."*

He began to construct, syllable on syllable, sentence upon phrase. He molded words, he cut them, he trimmed off what he didn't want, he added what he needed.

*"Lord, your mercy and power are*

*My strength is my devotion*

*To know you will love despite*

*My sins, despite my sins which . . ."*

It grew, like the framework of a great building reaching for the sky—the heavens. It loomed, sometimes dark, sometimes reflecting the light. But he knew that it was growing.

And as the work progressed he began to stay out later and later. He would watch and write. He would stare and scribble down what he saw. It was ten when he got in and then eleven, then later still. He waited until the theatres let out so that he could see cheerful crowds of people. He watched prostitutes so that he might know compassion.

The slips and scraps of paper he carried with him were surrounded by the wool of his coat. A knobby hand pressed both against his side. He entered his apartment.

"There he is again."

"Old smiler! I wonder what that old goat has to be grinning about?"

"I tell you, man, he's got something going. I know it."

"Sure, sure. Hercules is ripping off appliance stores."

"Did you notice? He's always got something stashed under his coat."

"Yeah."

As surely as the prayer had progressed, however, it became mired by the need for an ending, a statement, something to lace and bow his thoughts together. The need was there, but nothing came. There were no words, no words that he could find although he worked even harder than before. The late hours expanded; the depression, the frustration returned. So did the pain.

He thought, perhaps, the season could rescue him. The city was about to turn Christmas. Gold sashes covered the display windows of the famous department stores and little red and green signs announced that this window would soon offer an animated scene of Goldilocks and the Three Bears celebrating the holidays. There is no finer time in the city.

He sought out a face or a gesture—a kind act—anything he thought might inspire a verse. It was a simple one. A sidewalk Santa put down his bell to assist a struggling white haired lady in a dark red coat across an icy street. A bundled six-year-old cheered because he had finally seen, among the hundreds downtown, the real Santa Claus. It must be, Mrs. Claus was with him.

He forgot the pain and the muscles in the back of his neck. The only thing he felt was his brain break into gear.

"Through Him, with Him, in Him,

*Within Him.*

*Amen.*

It was finished. Over. And it was time to go home. He walked and he trotted and he ran until he had to stop and save up his breath for the next sprint. As he puffed, he pulled out his pad and began to read over what he had written.

"Lord, your power and your mercy are. . ." He stopped. He stopped puffing. He read it again. He read it again. What had

happened? He had worked so carefully, so long. The grammar was right, the words were right. It should all be there, but wasn't. As units, as phrases, his sentences were fine, together, somehow they refused to speak together. The prayer was good, it was interesting, but it didn't reflect month after month of work and he knew it wasn't perfect. It seemed plain and ordinary and he felt worthless.

He pushed the pad back under his coat and sadly wobbled toward his apartment. He felt the cold. He pulled himself up the stairs of the brownstone. Where were his rough friends?

"The chill must have driven them in," he thought.

He creaked up a flight of rickety treads and pushed in the peeling door to his room. A warm hand gripped his arm, restrained at the elbow. Somebody slammed the door behind him. Another hand pinned his shoulder to the wall.

"O.K., give!"

They ripped his coat back throwing three dried leather boots flipping along the rug.

"Here." They pulled the yellow pad from under his arm.

"What the hell is this?" The sound of the paper tearing, the infant dying, stabbed the old man deeper than any blade. He tensed and struggled. They flipped him back over the cot and while one held him down with a knee, the others began to tear the room apart.

"Where is it, old man?"

"Tell us."

The words came from opposite corners of the room.

Then from above, "Tell us damn you!"

"What—what do you want? What—"

The voice from above pulled something out of his pocket. There was a click and a flash.

"O God, have mercy," he breathed. He knew the words were perfect.

## BEAN SNAPPING SONG

(for two readers because no one can snap beans alone)

SNAP

snap

ON HER GREEN FRONT PORCH

My grandma sings as she snaps beans.

THE WIND RATTLES SHUCKS

TURNING DRY BROWN OVER HEAD.

SNAP

snap

THE KIDS RACE CARS IN THE DIRT.

in the dirt.

THE GRASS IS RAGGED.

The boy didn't come to mow again.

HER APRON LIFTS IN THE BREEZE

AND SHE REMEMBERS,

"Oh the soup!"

OH THE SOUP

AND THE BEANS

spill on the green floor.

## PISCES

I

Water runs in rivulets—

Warm and gentle running rills

Rippling down my naked form:

Coursing round my curving breasts

Streaming past my stomach's flesh

Branching only at my thighs

Waterfalling down my legs

Splashing loudly at my feet

Disappearing there.

II

The porcelain womb, swelling fluids

And foam, waits the intrusion of flesh.

A pink toe assaults virgin seas,

Followed by limbs slipping limp into heat.

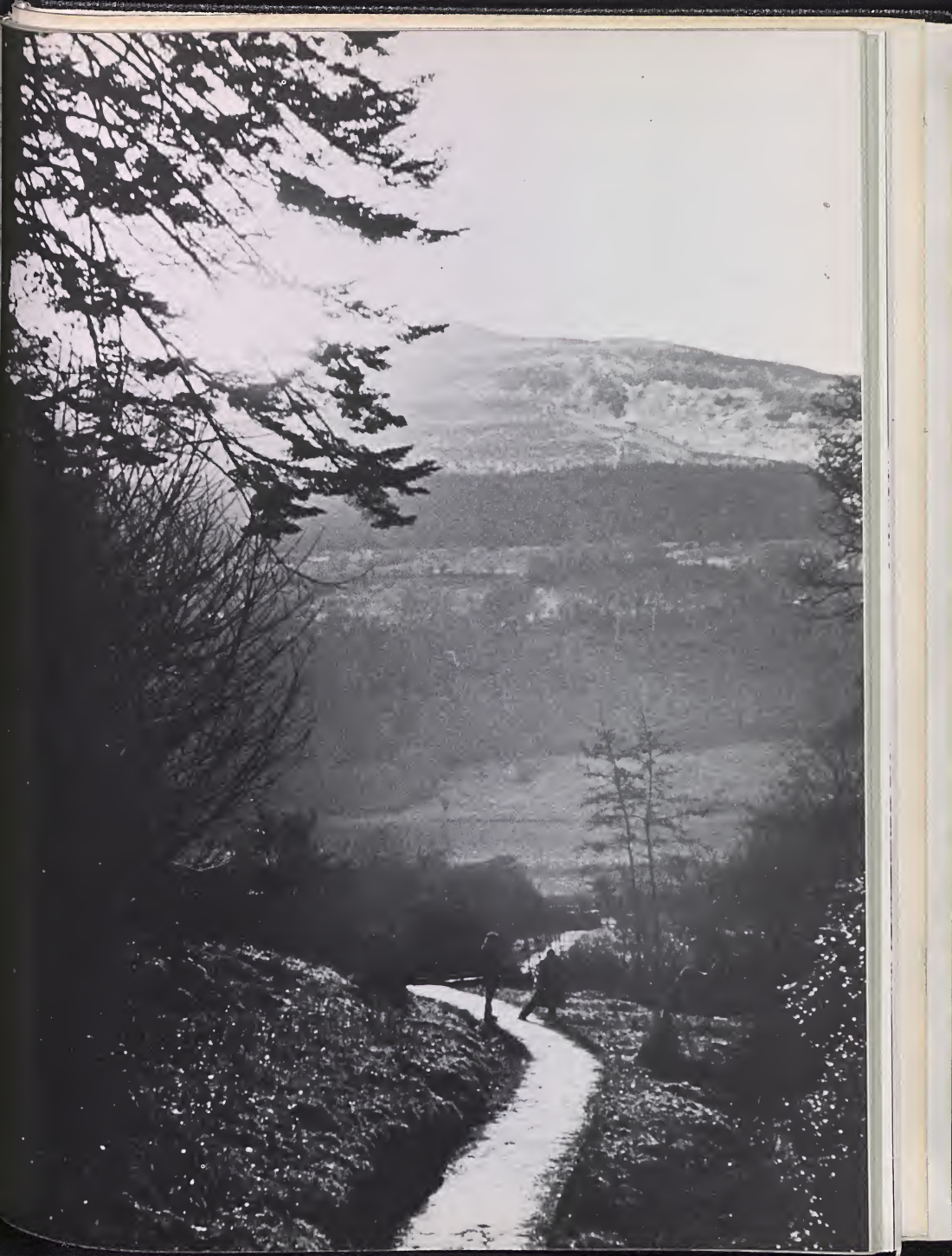
Bubbles burst kissing flushed skin,

Shimmering rainbows on glossy white walls.

An essence of clean bathes the air

As the trespasser basks.







# Nice to Love

by Tommy O'Toole

Most girls are the same to me. Sure, I thought I was in love once. I was almost certain of it. And, that girl, Jeannie, was a bit different. But, basically, girls are all alike. You cater to them and act nice just to get something out of it but you don't care. You never understand, either. They try to manipulate you—but you can't let them. You make the moves—you control them. They'd do what you want or it doesn't get done.

Of course, they are devious in their own ways. Jeannie used to tell me that girls are even more devious than guys could ever imagine. Maybe she was right. Guys like to think they have girls figured out; only it's the girls who let them think that way. Guys can never understand girls.

I still don't understand why Jeannie left me. I've quit trying to understand. It doesn't help any, doesn't heal my pride. And, that's what hurts most—my pride. Oh, we talked a lot and had big plans. There was some loss. My friends, though, gave me no sympathy.

I rebounded all right. Started picking up girls, "making the skoad scene," as they say. It was fun for a while but then it became a little boring. You'd pick up a girl, take her to your room and screw her. She'd say something silly, want to stay all night, and wait for your phone call. I kept few numbers and referred to them only on drunken, lonely Saturday nights. The girls would sound thrilled that I called back but would come over and not want to do it again.

"I don't think we should this time. I don't think it's safe," they would say. But, then they'd always stay and do enough to keep me satisfied and make me almost want to call them back again.

Guys love to pick up girls—even if they are skoads. You can at least have a good laugh the next day and maybe even win an award at the fraternity's spring banquet.

Picking up girls, even when they feigned submission, gave me a feeling of power. I knew it was a game—a lot of the time I wasn't sure if the girls did. I played along and enjoyed myself. Seldom did I leave a party and return alone to my room three floors above the frat lounge. My secret, if you could call it that, was that I thought most girls were put on the earth solely to be pick-ups. At least some of them acted that way. I didn't care what I said or did or to whom I said or did it. I respected few girls. Why should I? I loved one and she kicked me in the balls.

After a while, the whole thing became a drag. I even stopped trying at parties. Once on a Saturday night I even studied.

Then, one Friday I guess it was in January, we had a party and I was feeling excitable. I mingled for a while until I spied a girl who had never been to one of our parties—at least I hadn't met her. I caught her attention and smiled. She smiled back. She was talking to two guys and seemed bored. I joined them. We said "Hello," and introduced ourselves. I asked her where she was from.

"You won't remember. I'm not even sure myself anymore," she replied.

I didn't know what to make of that. I said something silly, trying to be funny. She smiled obligingly. A challenge, I thought.

"I've never seen you here before," I said.

"Wonder why."

"Huh?"

"Nothing."

The other two guys had left and I asked her if she wanted beer.

"No. Too much beer and I get drunk."

"That's the object," I said.

"Oh," she answered, while glancing around the crowded room. I tried to look her in the eyes. She had wonderful eyes—big and dark, the kind you see in magazines. I wanted to see them more closely.

"I bet you have nice eyes," I said.

"What?" she answered, turning to look at me.

"You do."

"Oh—thank you." I could tell that she didn't want to play the usual game. So, I asked her to sit on one of the couches in the room. We did. On the crowded couch we were forced to touch.

"What's your name again?" she asked.

"Thanks a hell of a lot."

"I bet you don't remember mine."

"Margaret."

"That's very good."

"Hey, you know..." I told her my name and we talked some more. Soon, a very drunk girl staggered into the room and threw up on the floor in front of us. We both laughed. I helped Margaret off the couch and we moved into another room. She surrendered her hand to me as we battled our way through the people.

"That poor girl!" Margaret laughed.

"Yeah, but what about my poor brothers who have to clean up?"

"Do you?"

"No. Seniors are exempt from clean up."

"Must be nice."

"At times."

"Hey, I'll take that beer now." She handed me her glass and fought my way to the keg. In a while I returned with two beers and found Margaret talking with another guy. Noticing me, she turned from him and smiled.

"You're wonderful," she said and she kissed my cheek. I was a bit surprised. That was one of my moves.

We retreated to the only quiet corner of the lounge and decided to suggest that we go to my room. I wasn't sure how to ask her. She seemed different.

She broke my concentration. "Do you get high?"

"Sometimes," I said.

"Do you have any?"

"No. But I know where I can get some."

"No. I thought if you had some with you we could go."

"—Let's go anyway."

"Where?"

"Upstairs. C'mon."

She answered yes with a coy smile and we left the party and sneaked up the stairs to my room. I put some soft music on the stereo. She turned off the light and put her arms around me. We kissed—hard and long and even with meaning. I began

# NEW ORLEANS FOLLOWIN' YOU HOME

Wheels below begin their involuntary turning  
And churn washed-out memories of the night  
Deep into the mind.

Ears swear they hear jazz, the inescapable jazz—

Fighting in the streets

Driving the tortured

To those narrow hidden bars,

Lighted with fluorescent glow,

That burrow themselves away from

The street and the people and the music.

Flesh shudders, wanting to elude

The boundless, deathless notes

Played by the train

As it warms up.

Dark wheels wheezing, sweating.

A clarinet howls from out of the mesh of noise,

And senses vibrate as a bass hums below.

Banjos battle horns

And drums roll faster.

Don't follow the music.

It demands too much.

ELIZABETH RUSSELL WAKEFIELD

take her clothes off and she helped. It was happening fast but it had happened fast before. Soon we were in bed, our bodies completely naked. The sheets were cold against my bare skin. So were her feet. But, her thighs and chest were warm as we cuddled and forgot about the party below or the cold outside.

Her touch was new and exciting, different from any girl I had been with. We explored each other at first, not really sure how far we would go. I touched her and she jumped. We both smiled and I felt relaxed for the first time since Jeannie.

Margaret asked me if I felt uncomfortable. I said no and she smiled, seemingly a little unsure of herself but confident of her actions. We kissed hard and stopped exploring. We knew each other well enough.

I suddenly decided that I *really* wanted to make love with her. Before we got in bed I was indifferent. I really didn't care if she was going to stay all night or not. She would be nice to love but I had loved before and would again. Nevertheless, she aroused me like none had since Jeannie.

I was going to say something stupid like, "Well, do you wanna?" when she kissed me again and started breathing hard. She rolled over on her back and helped me climb on top of her. I felt a bit uncomfortable because she had initiated the action. Only Jeannie had done that before. I was usually forced to make the move, go through the motions to please the girl and pretend to respect her.

We made love, both breathing hard. I tried to convince myself that the actual love-making was different with her. I couldn't. Still, for some reason, I was caught in a dream. It was as if we had neither past nor future, only the present—forever. I really wanted her. I really wanted it to be different. And it was, for a while. But she groaned like the others; she breathed heavily like the others; she sighed like the others. In a way, I

was disappointed. It really should have been different. The preliminaries were so new, so exciting, that the love-making was anti-climactic.

When it was over, though, she didn't say, "Oh, you were wonderful" or, "That was marvelous," or, even something stupid like one girl had said to me, "Thanks, I needed that." In fact, Margaret said nothing. She stroked softly my hair and slid her fingers across my face as if she were a blind person trying to make out my features.

After we lay listening to the music for a few moments, she said, simply, softly, sincerely, "Do you want me to leave?"

I had never before been asked that and I didn't quite know what I was expected to answer. Was she playing with me or testing me? I wasn't sure.

"No," I blurted, "why should I?"

"I just wanted to know."

"Oh."

We lay silent again. After a little bit, she rolled over and kissed me quickly on the lips.

"I really can't stay," she said.

"Do you have to go?"

"Yes."

"Can't you stay a little longer?"

She sighed.

"Well," I said, "can I at least walk you back to your dorm?"

"If you want to."

I did, really. "Can I have your number?" I asked.

"You'll never call."

"Sure I will."

"I don't think so. But if you knew my last name you could look the number up."

It suddenly occurred to me that I did not know her last name.

"What is it?" I inquired.

"Nothing."

"What? I mean your last name."

"Sorry. I thought you were going to ask me something silly like, 'What's the matter?'" I admitted that I had thought about asking her that.

"Nothing's wrong," she said. "I enjoyed it. You're very nice."

"Gee, thanks." I wanted to add "bitch," but couldn't.

"Can I see you again?" I asked.

"I think not. It's better this way."

She sounded so cold, so indifferent. She sounded, for some strange reason, so familiar.

We got out of bed and began to get dressed. Neither of us spoke. The worst thing about lovemaking is afterwards having to get up and dress. I turned on the light and she turned away because she did not yet have a shirt on. I thought that was stupid. When we were ready, I tried to kiss her and she meekly obliged.

We walked down the steps. The party had ended. The night air was cold and I could see my breath as we talked about nothing. The walk to her dorm was slow and empty. She had just been so close and now she seemed as far away as the football games at someone else's college. I made a vain attempt to get angry at her and at least have the satisfaction of yelling. But I couldn't.

When we reached the dorm I stopped and asked her, "Why?" She smiled and kissed me quickly . . . I think that she knew that I couldn't understand.

"Girls can do it too. We like to enjoy ourselves . . . Bye."

I watched puzzled as she went inside. Then, I walked back to my dorm in the cold.



## HIGH SKINNY ORCHARD

A thin boy high in the old orchard  
Tossed down the last autumn apple;  
    Gabriel howls  
He has a reason, his face is odd,  
Gardens wither under a cold shadow.

Thin plumes of sunset are high  
and beams once fierce pamper his chill  
In the sun he sees a flamingo,  
    a body fading  
as his eyes gather earth,  
gather earth.

Crows sound a warning.  
Not a twig unsettled when  
His arm limb loosened, fleshy  
    straws uncrimping after  
stoppered fluid looses tension.

Dropping silently he joins  
    the late harvest.

CRAIG SHAFFER

## CAN YOU REALLY SEE SAVANNAH FROM HERE?

Sure, the Mediterranean sounds romantic  
but, the Atlantic is here.

A water wall that keeps tongues tied,  
but, no international affairs tonight:  
Affairs rob the air of romance.

The sea is calm, tonight, for  
The waves have lost their usual nerve.  
    but, the tide is full, the moon lies fair.  
The moon-blanché sea glimmers toward.  
    Come to the window, see?  
The moon is showing old movies on the sea:  
The slow but timely cadence offers to beat  
    as my heart is beating now.  
    It can't catch up!  
Oh, sure the Mediterranean sounds romantic  
    but, the Atlantic is here—  
    and, so are we.

DOUGLAS SHOUSE

## VEERING INTO SYMBOL

When I go back and sit on the  
Rusty swings,  
The aged metal complains loudly  
And flakes of old swing get caught in my hair.  
I love these swings, but I can  
No longer  
Scrabble at the clouds  
In ever-widening arcs  
With curled, summer-worn toes.

We built our house a year ago,  
Obviously upon sand, as it took  
Only each other to tear it down.

But it was such a house!  
Rooms full of light, and rooms  
With a parchment smell, for exploring.  
Beds to wrap around ourselves,  
And a fire in every room.

And a basement entered by rickety  
Slats of unpainted wood.  
Walls of earth and floor of clay,  
And dim, cool, musty shelves  
Loaded with mason jars  
Filled with an autumn's harvest.

Yet here we stand, both alone  
And watching the weathered ruins.  
See! It smolders still!  
You turn to me,  
Stumbling to my side.  
My eyes are watering—  
There's ash in them, I think—  
As we kneel and embrace by our debris.

GARDNER CAMPBELL

## THREE SEASONS AFTER

She double crossed April, May—  
On the hill where I stood the weather  
Of winter, slate skied, broken hinge winded,  
Bent branched limbs out of life,  
Defied easter breezes and sunshine  
Was stabbed in the side—she died:  
I saw spring in mourning,  
Wildflowers wilting in bed, lack of sun,  
Lack of her warmth. My lids were nailed  
Open, shutters in summer—she passed  
From my windows taking the spring air.  
She thieved my breath and left me  
Coughing tears. And I cried to grave skies  
My God why has she forgotten us?

Winter is in season now on the hill.  
I stand still watching Christ lift holy hands  
To sun empty skies.

KAREN DRESSER BARNES



# The Egg's Too Hard Again

by Sammy Post

For Chrissake, she thought, why the hell can't he get down here and eat so I can get back in bed? Meg yawned hard. She felt a strange burning in her eyes and felt like keeping them shut the rest of the day.

"Your egg's on the table," she yelled out the kitchen door. The words exhausted all her energy. She opened a cabinet and reached her hand between a box of cold cereal and a box of pancake mix. Feeling the large bottle of aspirin which was too high and too deep for her to see, she firmly grasped the bottle and sat down at the kitchen table with it, across from her husband's eggs.

Her uncombed black hair fell loosely on her cheek and she blew it aside. The blackness of her hair complemented her deep brown eyes and light smooth complexion. Until recent months, she had thought of herself as a pretty girl, but ever since she had put on a few pounds in the middle, she had changed her self-concept to that of an attractive woman.

She put two aspirin in her mouth, gulped down a glass of orange juice, and sat staring out the window. A few thin trees, a small grassy yard, and a large parking lot lay between her and a modern red-brick church. She could not stop thinking about what the high school boys did in the parking lot the day before. What kids will do, she thought. How they can risk their lives that way and enjoy it so much? What makes them do it? Why do they like to do that kind of thing?

She remembered the first time she saw it and how she began to scream before she saw the boy was all right. A boy lay on his back, stiff and straight, in the middle of the parking lot. Several feet away, on two sides of him, stood some other boys. Behind his head was empty parking lot, but his feet pointed to a dirty white pickup truck on one end of the lot. A boy started the truck and headed toward the boy lying on the asphalt. All the boys shouted what they considered jokes at the boy who lay as if he were made of stone. The boys laughed and watched as the truck quickly dashed over the boy, making him invisible for a split second, and came to a hurried stop. The boy driving and the boy on the ground emerged laughing and joyfully celebrating their heroic deeds. She could still feel the utter relief at that moment.

"The egg's too hard again," her husband Phil said softly to himself, but loud enough for his wife to hear. He had entered the room, sat down at the table heavily, drank his juice, and poked his egg with a fork, seemingly all in one motion. He was thin but strong looking, with a tight muscular face and deep hard green eyes.

"Your egg's *always* hard. You might as well cook it yourself," she said as she abruptly blew away the strand of hair which hung over her face. Her forehead rested snug in the palm of her hand and she looked straight down, halfway reading the label on the aspirin bottle.

"Sure. Why not?" he said. "Why not cook my own food? And yours, too. And clean the house and everything else around this goddamned place."

"You don't think I lift a finger, do you? she said, still not looking up.

"Yeah, I know you work hard," he said.

The *hell*," she said, now occasionally glancing at him. "You don't mean that. You think my butt stays in this chair all day and in that bed all night."

"Don't do that again," he said. "Everytime I say one little thing you make me sound like some goddamn kind of over-critical bastard. Don't make me sound like an over-critical bastard again."

"I'm not making you sound like anything," she said, looking him straight in the face.

"Yeah, but I know the way you do it," he said. "Anyway, I know you do a lot of stuff around here. I used to be a bachelor, you know. And you *heard* me say I'll get somebody to help you out around here if you take that job."

"For Chrissake, I can take care of my own house," she said.

"I just suggested it. God, you're touchy."

"Yes, I seem to be," she said.

"Touchy as hell," he said. He had finished his egg and toast and he proceeded to use his fingertips to lightly peck around his plate, trying to get up all the crumbs from his toast.

"You sure haven't made things easier for me," she said. "You're not exactly the easiest guy to get along with."

"I'm going to the office. It's too early to start this kind of bickering."

"What about lunch?" she said.

"I don't know. I might not eat."

"That'll be the day," she said.

"Listen, what about the job? Do you want to work or not?"

"I don't know," she said, as if that answer to his question would hurt him.

"That didn't answer my question. Peters said you have to decide by today. Yes or no?"

"I still don't know," she said.

"This is stupid," he said. "This whole thing has been stupid. Peters was nice enough to come and ask me if you wanted a good job, decent pay, in the same building I'm in, and after two weeks you still can't make up your goddamn mind. You know how many applications he's got up there. Hell, he could have given that job to anybody two weeks ago."

"I can't make up my mind."

"I don't see what's so damn hard about it. I told you I wasn't going to lean one way or the other. It's your decision. Simple. Do you want to work or don't you?"

"I don't know."

"Well, what the hell am I supposed to do? I've got to tell him today."

"Let me think about it and call you at the office."

"I've never seen anything like this in my life," he said. "You think about something for two weeks, and now you need one more day. Well, maybe you can straighten things out in your head today. And I mean *today*. I'll tell Peters, when I get to



